

# W&RSETA RESEARCH STUDIES

Final report



## Topic 1

Transformation to advance business sustainability and resilience, with a focus on building entrepreneurship



IMPACT ADVANTAGE  
February 2022

**W&RSETA: RESEARCH STUDIES**

**FINAL REPORT**

**FEBRUARY 2022**

**Topic 1**

**Transformation to advance business sustainability and  
resilience, with a focus on building entrepreneurship**

Phase 4 Report

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report constitutes the final (Phase 4) deliverable of a study commissioned by the W&RSETA to explore transformation to advance business sustainability and resilience with a focus on entrepreneurship development. It triangulates across the findings from the literature review and the empirical work to respond to the research questions. The results that are summarised in this document point to the following:

### ***Resilience and sustainability***

*Resilient* enterprises can “bounce back” from adversity, while *sustainable* enterprises are able to sustain profitability in the long run. Both these aspects result from businesses that are organisationally well-developed, that fill a market need, and that function profitably. Development for resilience and sustainability should therefore target the development of well-functioning, profitable businesses.

### ***Entrepreneurial characteristics***

Critical factors for entrepreneurial success are rooted in personal as well as business dimensions. Entrepreneurial characteristics include resilience, perseverance, attitude to adversity, and others, while skills relate to business management, financial management, and many more. Successful entrepreneurs proactively integrate skills and resources to facilitate success.

### ***Skills development and business support***

Entrepreneurs express their development needs in terms of skills that are delivered through holistic enterprise support. Skills development needs include both functional (technical and business) and soft (enterprising) skills. Successful entrepreneurial development programmes respond to development needs in an integrated manner; they assess entrepreneurs relative to their development path, and then engage them in a *customised* process of training, business support, and progress monitoring. Business support includes coaching, mentoring, networking, access to resources, and others. Access to finance should be provided in a structured manner that is linked to business needs and based on goal achievement. Financial support for workshop attendance should be defined in collaboration with sub-sector or local development stakeholders.

### ***Technology***

Technology requirements vary across enterprises. Most SMMEs require basic technology training and access. More advanced enterprises use technology to enable resilience and improve efficiencies, while less advanced enterprises require technology for marketing, basic communication, and others. The push towards 4IR technology strategies should be linked to the context and readiness of enterprises to adopt technology.

### ***Implications for entrepreneurial development***

The W&RSETA needs a differentiated approach in supporting entrepreneurial development. This requires partnerships, flexible processes, and the development of holistic, integrated strategies. A model is proposed that integrates skills development, business support, and technology adoption, and that meets enterprises along their development path. It is proposed that the W&RSETA partners with experienced service providers for delivery of programmes. Clear impact targets, expressed relative to sub-sector or local objectives, should be defined, and subsector or local stakeholders should be engaged in the detailed design of programmes. Further, a significant need and opportunity exists for the W&RSETA to collaborate with other SETAs in the development of an integrated national approach to SMME development in the sector. Pointers are provided for next steps for the W&RSETA’s entrepreneurial development positioning at the strategic, tactical, and operational levels. These include developing the vision and impact targets, partnering for design and impact, and facilitating engagement.

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## DEFINITIONS and ABBREVIATIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
Base or Bottom of the Pyramid (BoP)	Refers to the large but poorest section of the economic population and in this context the businesses that serve them
Design science research	A study of the way in which objects or systems are designed and improved. Research results are often developed through multiple study iterations.
Resilience and sustainability framework	Framework used to reflect the critical elements that affect resilience and sustainability of entrepreneurs in the target group. The framework is developed and refined through the various research instruments (literature review, interviews, etc.), and forms the basis for recommendations.
Framework dimensions	A categorisation of the factors that are important in SMME development for resilience and sustainability.
SMEs	Small and medium enterprises
SMMEs	Small, medium, and micro enterprises
Systems model	A model that explains how key interactions highlight the factors that are relevant in SMME development for resilience and sustainability.
W&R	Wholesale and Retail
W&RSETA	Wholesale and Retail Sector and Training Authority

## DOCUMENT HISTORY

<b>Revision</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Date submitted</b>
Document 1.0	Release of report to the W&RSETA research and innovation specialist	28 February 2022

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The W&RSETA, within its mandate to support the Wholesale and Retail (W&R) sector in ongoing improvement of sector-wide skills development, commissioned this research study by *Impact Advantage* on two topics, namely, (1) transformation to advance business sustainability and resilience with a focus on entrepreneurship development; and (2) a strategic evaluation of suitable learning interventions for the employed and unemployed.

This document constitutes the Phase 4 deliverable for the first topic (transformation to advance business sustainability and resilience with a focus on entrepreneurship development). The Phases 1 and 2 reports developed a preliminary framework for entrepreneurial development based on the literature, while the Phase 3 report added an empirical perspective to the preliminary framework (interviews, online surveys, and case studies).

This report integrates across the earlier information to answer the research questions. In summary, it organises the research questions into the following themes, and provides a response to each:

- Characteristics of successful entrepreneurs;
- Skills and business development needs;
- Entrepreneurs and technology;
- Resilience and sustainability; and
- Entrepreneurial development.

The methodology that was adopted for this study is reiterated in Section 2, followed by a response to research questions in Section 3. Section 4 outlines recommendations, and Section 5 summarises the response to research questions, with references to supporting information across the three preceding reports. Section 6 concludes.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The literature review (Phases 1 and 2) formed the basis for a theoretical understanding of the key factors that influence resilience and sustainability for enterprises within the W&R Sector, and of elements that are critical to the success of development programmes.

The work described in this document triangulates between all data sources that have been consulted for this project to develop an interpretation for the various research questions, to refine the entrepreneurial development framework that was developed, and to make some recommendations. This section summarises the research questions and reiterates the research approach.

### 2.1 Research objective and questions

Topic 1 of this research study has the following objectives, as per agreement with the W&RSETA:

- Examine the characteristics of successful entrepreneurs across the W&R sector;
- Develop an economic entrepreneurial business model;
- Compare successful entrepreneurs in the W&R sector and FoodBev sector; and
- Determine education and training needs for entrepreneurs within the W&R sector



The W&RSETA proposed that the following could be undertaken in exploring the Topic 1 research objectives:

- Document and understand the theoretical perspectives of how skills support the resilience and longevity of SMEs and micro-enterprises in the W&R sector, especially considering shocks to the W&R system, such as COVID-19 and climate change
- Engage with stakeholders to understand how education and training can and does equip W&R SMEs and micro-enterprises with knowledge, expertise, skills, and/or competencies required to sustain their businesses/livelihoods and be more resilient in times of uncertainty;
- Identify case studies to illustrate practice. This can include individuals and/or examples of how VET providers have adequately provided W&R SMEs and micro-enterprises to sustain their business/livelihoods and be more resilient;
- Draw on findings to present insights and learnings on the skills, knowledge, and expertise required to enhance W&R SME and micro-enterprise resilience and sustainability; and
- Contribute towards the development of a strategy for SMMEs, micro-enterprises, informal traders.

This report (Phase 4) summarises the research findings on all of the above questions, by integrating the perspectives from the literature review (Phases 1 and 2 reports) and empirical work (Phase 3 report).

## 2.2 Research approach

The overall research approach is broadly based on the Design Science research approaches, which supports the use of multiple iterations of research instruments to develop and refine the research products (Gregor and Hevner, 2013).

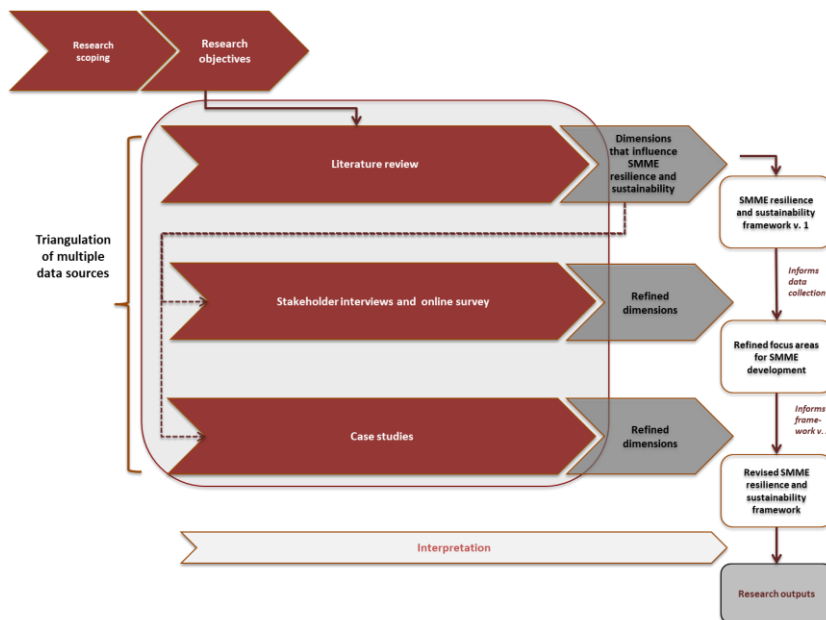


Figure 1 Research approach

The various iterations of the study, as outlined in Figure 1, contributed information that refined the understanding of the context and jointly contributed to the research outputs. The contributions of the literature review and empirical work are summarised in Table 1:

**Table 1 Research questions and research instruments**

Focus	Research question	Literature review	Online survey	Stakeholder engagement (interviews)	Case studies (local entrepreneurs)
Topic 1 Entrepreneurial development for Resilience & sustainability	Characteristics of successful entrepreneurs & Theoretical basis for skills development in support of resilience and sustainability	1 <sup>st</sup> review: Identify characteristics 2 <sup>nd</sup> review: International/ local cases		Refine characteristics	
	Economic entrepreneurial business model	2 <sup>nd</sup> review: Scope the framework/ model		Refine model	Refine model
	Comparison of successful entrepreneurs in W&R and Beverages sectors		Compare characteristics and growth path		
	Education and training needs	Identify needs		Confirm needs	

The case studies in the above table are informed by both the literature review and stakeholder interviews.

### 2.3 Method

The methods followed for the literature review and empirical work (data collection) are summarised in the Phase 1 and Phase 3 reports, respectively.

## 3. RESPONSE TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This section provides responses to the various research questions, by integrating results from the literature review and empirical work. The questions are grouped according to the themes listed in the Introduction, and are summarised at the end of each subsection.

### 3.1 A note on resilience and sustainability

The premise of this work is to develop insights that are all related to improving the *resilience* and *sustainability* of entrepreneurs in the wholesale and retail sector. To this end, we introduce and answer the following research question:

- *What are appropriate definitions of resilience and sustainability in the context of entrepreneurial development?*

The Phase 1 report explored theoretical perspectives on resilience and sustainability (see Section 3.2, Phase 1 report). Based on that exploration, as well as insights gained from empirical work, we proposed the following workable definitions against which the research questions are interpreted.

**Resilience** is defined as the ability of an SMME to recover from external shocks, and is dependent on characteristics of both the business and the entrepreneur. It predominantly refers to short-term shocks, but resilience to long-term decay is also relevant. Note that resilience could have a negative connotation, in the sense that SMMEs may “bounce back” to an undesirable context.

**Sustainability** refers to the ability of the SMME to “remain in business” over an extended period of time. While this is usually primarily interpreted as a financial consideration, a number of business capabilities inform sustainability.

These definitions were used as baseline to inform the remainder of the work.

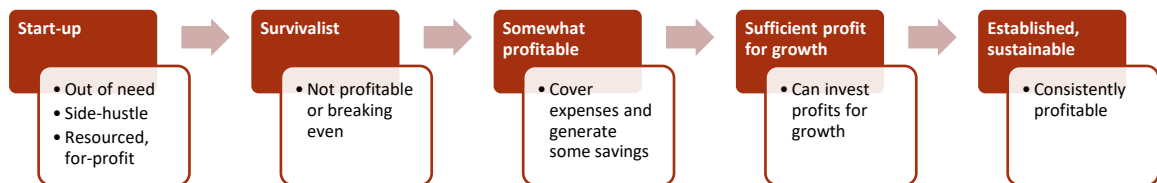
### 3.2 Characteristics of (successful) entrepreneurs

This section addresses the following research questions:

- Examine the characteristics of successful entrepreneurs across the W&R sector; and
- Compare successful entrepreneurs in the W&R sector and FoodBev sector.

#### **Success is relative**

The empirical work engaged “successful” entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs in general, and informal traders. *Success* has been interpreted broadly for the purposes of this study, and is seen as relative to the context within which the entrepreneur functions. We conceptualise an enterprise growth path as follows:



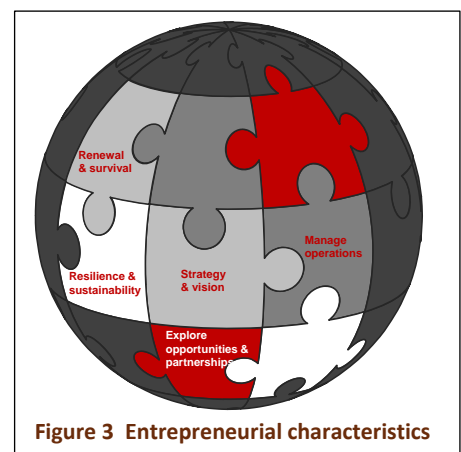
**Figure 2 Enterprise growth path**

In the case of start-ups, success may be defined as the ability to generate sufficient income from a side-hustle to leave formal employment and pursue the business interests on a full-time basis. In contexts where survivalist entrepreneurs predominate, success can be seen as entrepreneurs who manage to make a living and support their families. In addition to these entrepreneurs, successful entrepreneurs, as defined by their success in entrepreneurship competitions, were specifically targeted for interviews. These entrepreneurs were either managing to generate some profits or were in an active growth phase (see Phase 3 report, Section 3.1). Participants were sought from both the food and beverages and wholesale & retail sectors.

#### **Characteristics**

Both the theoretical (literature review) and empirical (interviews and surveys) views, as explored by this study, point towards individuals that have a unique combination of characteristics that include creating a vision, dealing with the uncertainties and challenges of business establishment, and coping with the hard work of making operations work. As such, personal characteristics of vision and perseverance are combined with business and technology know-how for successful enterprise creation.

Numerous models exist in literature to describe entrepreneurial characteristics, and we integrated characteristics that were proposed by a number of authors (see Phase 2 report). We then compared these characteristics (see Table 2) with aspects that emerged during the interviews with successful and resource-constrained entrepreneurs, and the online survey of informal traders. Our analysis indicated that all of the characteristics that were identified in the theoretical models were confirmed by the empirical data (see Appendix A for the analysis). Aspects that stood out from the empirical work are adaptability and flexibility in terms of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as participants’ passion and belief in what they are doing, and their optimism that they will succeed. Participants also reflected on the benefits of risk-taking in order to learn and grow.



**Table 2 A selection of entrepreneurial characteristics**

THEMES AND CHARACTERISTICS					
Strategy & vision	Long-Term Focus / Vision	Managing Operations	Hard working	Resilience and sustainability	Self-reliance
	Goal mindset		Ability to complete tasks		Self-confidence
	Passion		Decisiveness/decision-maker		Optimism
Exploring opportunities & partnerships	Curiosity / seek opportunities	Continuous renewal & survival	Versatility/ willingness to learn		Comfortable with failure
	Team builder / collaborative		Adaptability/ flexibility		Persistence/ tenacity
	Ability to network		Innovative/ creativity		
	Persuasiveness		Competitiveness		
	Motivation / drive				
	Risk tolerance				
	Decisiveness / decision maker				

Sources: adapted from <sup>1</sup>Bortz (n.d.), <sup>2</sup>Centre for Economic and Financial Education (n.d.), <sup>3</sup>Indeed Editorial Team (2021), <sup>4</sup>Miller (2020), <sup>5</sup>Rojas (2021) AND empirical work summarised in Phase 3 report

**Variation across sectors and phases**

The characteristics of entrepreneurs, from those starting a business from necessity or as side-hustle to those who have reached stability, are similar; however, the emphasis may vary depending on their growth path. For example, start-up entrepreneurs may be drawing significantly more on their relationships with family and friends to unlock resources, while more established entrepreneurs would be drawing on their abilities to adapt to changing circumstances, to network for marketing and growth, and to optimise operations.



**Figure 4 Expression of characteristics per phase**

The characteristics and skills of informal traders were explored by asking them to express the skills that they were proud of. In communicating soft skills, participants reflected a larger emphasis on communication, leadership, teamwork, and similar, and less (or no) verbalisation of aspects such as resilience, visioning, goal mindset and others (see Appendix A). However, these may relate to the fact that informal trader responses were elicited through an online survey rather than interviews. It may also indicate that informal traders, with limited resources, are out of necessity focused on day-to-day survival rather than future growth.

**In summary**

- ☞ Success should be considered relative to context – that is, the success of start-up, survivalist, or established entrepreneurs should be interpreted relative to their goals.
- ☞ Characteristics of (successful) entrepreneurs are diverse, and include visioning and the ability to identify opportunities, perseverance and drive, decisiveness, task focus, and others.
- ☞ Characteristics do not seem to vary across different sectors, but the emphasis may vary depending on the status of the sector (e.g., competitiveness, sector performance, and others).
- ☞ Characteristics do not seem to differ for different stages of enterprise development, but entrepreneurs may draw on different characteristics, depending on where they are in the process.
- ☞ Supporting entrepreneurs towards success require consideration of these diverse characteristics.

### 3.3 Skills development and business support needs

This section addresses the following research question:

- Determine education and training needs for entrepreneurs within the W&R sector

The empirical exploration of the skills development needs of entrepreneurs rapidly revealed that entrepreneurs across the various growth phases of their enterprises (Figure 2) have a need for skills development that is contextualised – that is, skills development cannot take place through specific skills training alone; it needs to be done relative to the needs of the business at a specific point in time. This finding is confirmed by the literature review, which identified that *organisational development (enterprise development)* is key to sustainability and resilience. These include positioning within the external context, responding within the business environment, market access, innovation, accessing resources, and managing operations (see Phase 2 report, Section 3.2.2).

Table 3 summarises the *skills development and business support needs* of entrepreneurs across the enterprise growth path, as determined by the empirical work. The information is integrated from Section 3.2 in the Phase 3 report:

**Table 3 Skills and business development needs**

<i>Skills development and business support needs</i>			
<b>Business and technical skills</b>	Strategy & leadership	<b>Entrepreneurial support</b>	Mentorship, advice, coaching
	Business management		Holistic support
	General management		People “walking with you”
	Financial management		
	Retail management		
	Marketing & sales		
	People skills		
<b>Business development</b>	Technical skills	<b>Business operations</b>	Knowledge; support network:
	Access to support network		• Business processes (production, sourcing)
	Access to markets		• Understanding the value chain
	Customer and stakeholder relationship management		Business optimisation
<b>Business resources</b>		<b>Catalysing support</b>	Supply chain development
	Financial support (access to capital & working capital)		Established, reliable, credible business support programmes
	Facilities & equipment		
	Specialised facilities (e.g., transport and storage)		
	Access to raw materials		
	Technology		
	Skilled personnel		

Table 3 confirms that skills development needs should take place in a context where entrepreneurs have access to “Just-in-Time” support. This implies that entrepreneurs have access to mentorship and advice, are

embedded in support and knowledge networks, can access business resources for growth and, importantly, have access to established, reliable, and credible business support programmes. Continuity and ongoing support are essential requirements.

As for entrepreneurial skills development *per se*, a number of competency models were explored during the literature review. For the purposes of this study, we adopted a locally developed model of required entrepreneurial competencies (Botha et al, 2015) to illustrate the extent to which literature confirms the findings of the empirical work. The model indicates that entrepreneurs require both *functional* and *enterprising* competencies (see Phase 2 report, Section 3.2.1). Empirical work is integrated from the Phase 3 report, Section 3.2:

**Table 4 Skills development needs**

	<i>Requirements as per entrepreneurial development model (Botha et al, 2015)</i>	<i>Requirements identified through empirical work across entrepreneurial types</i>	<i>Notes</i>
<b>Functional competencies</b>	<b>Key skills</b>		
		Strategy and leadership	Need expressed by informal traders
	Marketing management	Marketing and sales	Identified across all entrepreneurs
	Financial management	Financial management	Identified across all entrepreneurs, all aspects of financial management
	Operational	Retail management	For example, re-stocking (inventory management)
	Legal skills	Regulatory compliance	Not mentioned as significant focus
	<b>Supportive skills</b>		
	General management	General / business management	Need expressed for both training and mentorship
	ICT skills	ICT skills	See Section 3.4
		Other technical skills	Industry-specific technical training: production process, material selection, etc.
	Human resource management	People skills	Delegation, trust, team development, etc.
	Networking		Identified as entrepreneurial characteristic
	Planning		Implicitly identified as part of business management
Research and development		This emerged in selected cases as a need of established (successful) entrepreneurs	
<b>Supportive competencies</b>	<b>Key skills</b>		
	Ability to gather and control resources	Business resources (see Table 4)	Access to capital, working capital, facilities, personnel
	Motivation (need for achievement)		Identified as success factor
	<b>Supportive skills</b>		
	Creativity	These requirements were identified during empirical work as characteristics of entrepreneurs, rather than as needs expressed by participants (see Table 2 and Appendix A)	
	Innovation		
	Role model interpretation		
	Opportunity recognition		
Calculated risk taking			
Personal life skills (adaptability to change, decision-making, negotiating, problem solving, ability to learn, time management)			

More detail and examples of skills development needs are contained in the Phase 3 report (Section 3.2).

Technology was a recurring aspect in all empirical work. This is discussed in Section 3.4 of this report.

Mentoring, coaching and the need for ongoing support is clear from the empirical data that was collected. Further, the review indicated that entrepreneurs (especially when starting out) are randomly engaging in skills development activities. The internet (google, and specifically YouTube videos) is a significant source of training. Entrepreneurs are hungry for development. However, a number of non-accredited service providers offer training that does not leave entrepreneurs with usable qualifications.

Finally, the method of delivery needs to match the working world of the entrepreneur. The online survey indicated that informal traders prefer training that is of shorter duration, that is delivered a number of times per month, and that is delivered outside of working hours.

#### **In summary**

- ☞ Entrepreneurial development has personal, organisational (enterprise), and technology dimensions
- ☞ The entrepreneurial development needs of participants in this study reflect the needs that have been identified in literature, however:
  - The entrepreneurial development support that is required at a specific point in time depends on where the business is on its growth trajectory (just-in-time training and development)
- ☞ General entrepreneurial development needs do not seem to differ across sectors (with the exception of sector-specific technical skills)
- ☞ Entrepreneurs, especially closer to start-up and in survivalist contexts, require guidance and a single point of entry for skills and enterprise development
- ☞ Entrepreneurs express a need for mentorship and coaching, in addition to skills development

### 3.4 Entrepreneurs and technology

While the Terms of Reference of this study did not explicitly include a research question pertaining to the use of technology in SMMEs, the research was in general contextualised within the context of the 4IR. This is aligned with government priorities and the focus on the 4IR, which find expression in, for example, the W&RSETA Strategic Plan (e.g., W&RSETA, 2020b) and the W&RSETA Sector Skills Plan 2020-2015 (W&RSETA, 2020a). In the latter, one of the top 5 SME skills gaps has been identified as Digital/4IR skills.

As a means of contributing to the understanding around technology in SMME development, the research explored the use of technology by entrepreneurs, as well as their development needs with respect to technology.

This information is summarised here, in response to the following questions that were formulated by the project team:

- *How is technology currently used by entrepreneurs;*
- *How is technology use contributing to SMME resilience and sustainability; and*
- *What are the technology development needs of SMMEs?*

The questions outlined here were asked during semi-structured interviews with successful entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs in general, and were also addressed in the online survey of informal traders.

A review of the literature (Phase 1 and 2 reports) positioned technology as a potential enabler of SMME resilience and sustainability by, for example, enabling remote work during the pandemic, providing alternative (online) channels to market, and improving efficiency. It is also seen as a means of integrating into value chains. However, the literature review uncovers relatively low uptake of technology among SMMEs, and identify barriers such lack of financial resources, access to training, ICT support, and limited connectivity (see Phase 2 report, Section 3.2.3).

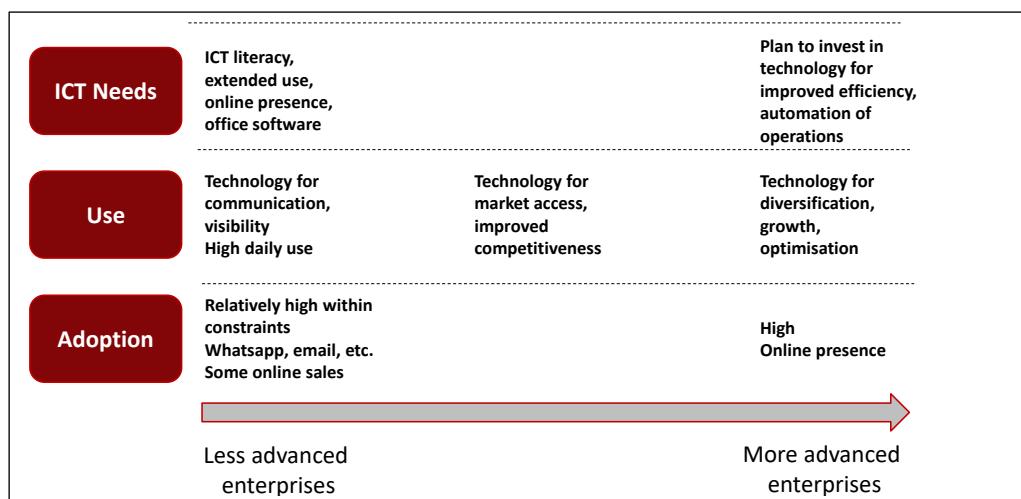
The empirical work supports the views expressed in literature, namely that ICT uptake is widespread but not necessarily focused on the use of advanced technologies. It highlighted the use of technology by successful entrepreneurs as a means of enabling resilience during the pandemic through, for example, diversification of marketing channels. Empirical work also revealed a high interest by informal traders in the development of (basic) ICT skills, and a relatively high uptake and frequent use of basic technologies such as WhatsApp.

The technology needs of informal traders include computer literacy; access to basic computing devices such as laptops and phones; access to networks and devices such as barcode scanners; software skills such as coding, website development, graphic design, and photography; online marketing and sales channels; and online presence via social media and websites; and use of office software (see Phase 3 report, Section 3.3).

The empirical work seems to support the views expressed for entrepreneurial development in general, namely, that ICT needs depend on the stage of the enterprise on its growth path.

Figure 5 depicts some differentiation in technology needs of different enterprise, with less advanced enterprises requiring ICT support for basic communication, productivity, and market connection functions, while more mature enterprises are moving towards technologies that can support growth, for example through diversification of sales channels, market access, and optimisation of production processes.





**Figure 5 Differentiation in ICT adoption and use**

The literature review (Phase 2 report, Section 3.2.3) concluded that:

*ICTs are a potential enabler of a more competitive and efficient SMME sector. However, uptake is low and requires an integrated approach that meets SMMEs where they are in terms of technology readiness, rather than overwhelming the sector with expensive technologies (time, cost) of limited value to business needs. Provision of technology access requires integrated programmes, with special emphasis on access to connectivity in rural areas (Beyers, 2016b).*

This view is supported by the empirical work outlined above. As such, it is concluded that expectations should be tempered somewhat in the adoption of 4IR technologies in the SMME sector. Paramount is that technology promotion should *enable* what entrepreneurs already find themselves busy with, and should be aligned with the constraints of the context in which they find themselves. Further, as for other SMME development needs, the point in the growth path, as well as the access to resources, determine what entrepreneurs can adopt in terms of technology enablement. Location (rural/urban) is an important consideration in connectivity constraints.

A big leap towards advanced 4IR technologies will remain elusive and counterproductive until fundamental aspects such as the reach and capacity of connectivity have been addressed. However, entrepreneurs express a need for an online presence and connection to markets, and are able to utilise social media platforms as a means of accessing training content. Innovations in support of these activities are more likely to facilitate impact in the foreseeable future.

In summary, the literature review and empirical work support the views that were expressed in the Phase 3 report, as repeated in the Summary box below.

#### In summary

- ☞ Successful entrepreneurs utilised technology as a means of enabling their resilience
- ☞ Successful entrepreneurs adopted technology to diversify marketing and sales channels during the COVID-19-related lockdown
- ☞ Successful entrepreneurs seek to invest in technology to improve the efficiency of their operations
- ☞ Informal traders express a high level of interest in technology to enable their businesses
- ☞ Informal traders have basic technology needs
- ☞ Resource-constrained environments have specific technology-related constraints that influence technology adoption
- ☞ Technology programmes need to align with the technology readiness of the context to be impactful
- ☞ 4IR technologies is a leap too far relative to the current state of technology adoption, especially for informal traders. The focus should first be on improved technology competence

### 3.5 Entrepreneurial development for resilience and sustainability

This section addresses the following research questions:

- *Document and understand the theoretical perspectives of how skills support the resilience and longevity of SMEs and micro-enterprises in the W&R sector, especially considering shocks to the W&R system, such as COVID-19 and climate change*
- *Engage with stakeholders to understand how education and training can and does equip W&R SMEs and micro-enterprises with knowledge, expertise, skills, and/or competencies required to sustain their businesses/livelihoods and be more resilient in times of uncertainty*
- *Identify case studies to illustrate practice. This can include individuals and/or examples of how VET providers have adequately provided W&R SMEs and micro-enterprises to sustain their business/livelihoods and be more resilient;*

These questions were addressed by reviewing literature of entrepreneurial development models (Phase 2 report, Section 3.4), and by interviewing stakeholders and documenting case studies of organisations engaged in entrepreneurial development (Phase 3 report, Section 3.5). The dimensions of resilient and sustainable SMMEs were also elicited through interviews with entrepreneurs.

#### 3.5.1 Revisiting resilience and sustainability

It is worth noting that most entrepreneurial development programmes do not specifically target the development of resilience and sustainability. With some exceptions (e.g., job creation or COVID-19 relief), programmes have a more holistic approach to enterprise development, which aim to develop robust businesses that are performing well – this could in turn imply the development of resilient and sustainable businesses. This perspective is inherent in the definitions of resilient and sustainable SMMEs, namely, enterprises that can recover from external shocks, and sustain profitable operations (see Section 3.1).

Interviews with entrepreneurs identified a number of aspects that support resilience such as the ability to diversify product offerings, to develop new channels to market, and to engage employees remotely. These aspects depended on the creativity of the entrepreneur, as well as on the ability to access resources to support such responses. **Business resilience** could hence be interpreted as being possible in contexts where resilient entrepreneurs have sufficient resources, or are able to access resources, to respond to change.

Interviews did not directly elicit responses in terms of **sustainability**. However, it was clear from engagement with entrepreneurs that the ability to remain in business is dependent on the ability of the entrepreneur to identify and fill an opportunity in the market, to access the market, to generate sales, and to manage finances and operations in a profitable manner. While financial sustainability is the indicator of sustainability, the inherent business capabilities of both the entrepreneur and the business support the ability to be financially sustainable. Characteristics of sustainable and resilient entrepreneurs and businesses have been discussed in Section 3.2 of the Phase 2 report (see also Sections 3.2 and 3.3 of this document).

#### 3.5.2 Approaches to entrepreneurial development

Entrepreneurial development models have been investigated through a literature review and engagement of stakeholders involved in entrepreneurial development. Both of these approaches echo the same principles of entrepreneurial and SMME development, namely holistic, integrated approaches that support entrepreneurial development through multiple intervention types. The key elements of successful development are summarised in Table 5, with reference to the literature and empirical work.

**Table 5 Elements of successful entrepreneurial development**

	Element	Description	Reference
Strate- gery	National strategy	Macro-level inclusive strategy is required to support development	Literature review: critical success factors <sup>1</sup>
	Holistic, multi-stakeholder approaches in an inclusive environment	Programmes should address training, mentorship, support, access to resources, and others	Literature review: critical success factors Theoretical models <sup>2</sup> : human capabilities approach Case from literature <sup>3</sup> : skills development within an incubation process Case studies <sup>4</sup> : A Financial excellence Case studies: C Business services support Case studies: E Skills/ enterprise development academy
Design	Partnerships	Strong partnerships are required to deliver effective programmes Partnerships unlock resources and facilitate linkages for long-term benefit Training can be differentiated in support of specific goals, e.g., “emergency” COVID-related skills development	Literature review: critical success factors Case from literature: partnerships for SMME development Case from literature: COVID relief in support of resilience Case studies: B Integrated community development Case studies: C Business services support
	Design for adoption and impact	Programmes should be context-specific, address demands, and be co-created with participants	Literature review: critical success factors
	Meet enterprise along its growth path	Deliver enterprise-specific support relative to where it is on its growth path	Literature review: critical success factors Theoretical models: integrated proficiency Case studies: D Empowering facilitators
	Assessment and selection	Enterprise assessment is required to target training; generic programmes are wasteful	Literature review: critical success factors Case studies: C Business services support Case studies: D Empowering facilitators Case studies: E Skills & enterprise development academy
	Content	Skills development for financial management and enterprise growth is critical, and should be supported by mechanisms of access to finance	Literature review: critical success factors
		Content should develop enterprising (entrepreneurial) as well as functional skills Soft skills as well as technical skills should be included	Theoretical models: integrated proficiency Theoretical models: exogenous and endogenous factors Case studies: E Skills & enterprise development academy
Implemen- tation	Awareness and access	Lack of awareness and access (e.g., eligibility, administrative complexity, frequency, time of day) disables	Literature review: critical success factors Case studies: D Empowering facilitators
	Long-term support	Once-off training engagements are ineffective	Literature review: critical success factors
	Continuous review and improvement	Programmes should be continuously adapting for impact	Literature review: critical success factors

**In summary**

- ☞ Successful entrepreneurial development programmes are holistic and integrative, combining skills development with various forms of enterprise support
- ☞ Successful programmes are context-specific and customised to the needs of the SMME, based on an assessment of the SMMEs position on a development trajectory
- ☞ Partnerships play a key role in delivering SMME development
- ☞ Content focuses on both entrepreneurial and functional (technical or business) skills
- ☞ The model of delivery is critical for uptake, and should be cognisant of enterprise realities

<sup>1</sup> Phase 2 report, Section 3.3.1; <sup>2</sup> Phase 2 report, Section 3.3.2; <sup>3</sup> Phase 2 report, Section 3.4; <sup>4</sup> Phase 3 report, Section 3.5

### 3.6 A model for entrepreneurial development

As per the intent of the design science research process outlined in Figure 1, the work culminates in a resilience / sustainability model for entrepreneurial development or, alternatively phrased, an economic entrepreneurial business model.

This section addresses the following research questions:

- *Develop an economic entrepreneurial business model;*
- *Draw on findings to present insights and learnings on the skills, knowledge, and expertise required to enhance W&R SME and micro-enterprise resilience and sustainability;*

#### Overview

This model is described here. It is expressed in terms of *Why, what and for whom, how and with whom* of entrepreneurial development. In line with the original premise of the research, the development model is interpreted from the people--process--technology perspective, which is embedded in a broader picture of impact, selection, and partnerships for delivery (Figure 6).

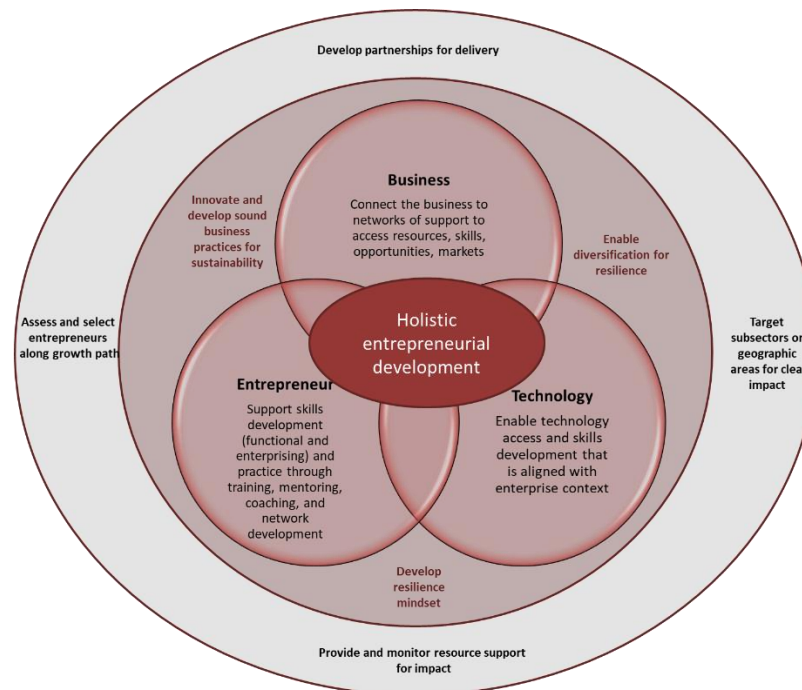


Figure 6 Entrepreneurial development model

#### **Why: Entrepreneurial development for impact**

The need for entrepreneurial development is significant and the field is populated by multiple role players, ranging from locally impactful players to random offerings with limited impact. It is proposed that, within available budgets, the W&RSETA targets specific subsectors and/ or geographic areas, and define clear performance parameters for the development programme. The overall long-term objectives of job creation and similar will emerge from the development of sustainable enterprises. The full outcomes chain, from input through output, outcome, and impact needs to be visible and defined for each targeted development initiative, *with a goal of developing sustainable enterprises.*

### ***What and for whom: Supporting targeted skills and enterprise development***

The research clearly shows that entrepreneurial development requires a combination of skills development (functional and enterprising), mentoring, and coaching (see Section 3.3 and 3.4 for a summary of skills, business, and technology development needs). This integrated approach should be specific to the enterprise. To this end, it is proposed that an assessment of the status of the enterprise is made before engagement in training, and that development is targeted accordingly. Research participants clearly voiced that programme attendees should be selected appropriately and through discussion with relevant industry players and other stakeholders.

*Funding* of entrepreneurs was another key aspect throughout the research. Consensus is that, while entrepreneurs could be funded for participation in development programmes, this funding should be attached to clear deliverables. For example, completion of development targets (as per an overall development plan) can be associated with access to specific resources. This should be clearly linked to the impact to be gained for the enterprise from accessing the resources, and should be part of a progress monitoring plan. Some experts have indicated that loans to survivalist enterprises are in the long run a liability rather than an asset, and that resource support should be considered relative to the maturity and profitability of the enterprise. However, lack of profitability should not be a factor that excludes SMMEs from access to support. Funding to attend or access training events (e.g., data) should be negotiated in the specific area or sub-sector that a programme is rolled out. Access to funding should not be an incentive for participation since this attracts individuals regardless of potential and frustrates the possibility to select enterprises for impact.

### ***How and with whom: SETA engagement model***

An integrated, holistic development model is proposed, that develops entrepreneurs through training, mentorship, coaching, and business support. Training should be specific to the entrepreneur's growth path and delivered in a manner that fits context (frequency and duration of delivery, etc.). A number of organisations have developed and refined their capabilities in delivering integrated entrepreneurial support. It is proposed that the W&RSETA develops partnerships at three levels:

- With sub-sector and local stakeholders for customisation of design and delivery
- With a portfolio of service providers to deliver holistic entrepreneurial development, funded and guided by the W&RSETA
- Industry partners (including service providers, other SETAs, government institutions) for access to broader resources, alignment of initiatives across organisations, and development of a national strategy for retail SMME development.

#### **In summary**

- ☞ A model is proposed that facilitates holistic entrepreneurial and enterprise development
- ☞ Broad, generic programmes should be targeted by initiatives that are sub-sector or geography-specific
- ☞ Impact parameters should be clearly defined, preferably per initiative and/or geography
- ☞ Impact parameters should be linked to the development of well-functioning, sustainable enterprises rather than secondary parameters such as job creation
- ☞ Partnerships are a key element of delivery
- ☞ Stakeholders should be consulted for design and selection of specific initiatives
- ☞ Financial support should be within the context of an enterprise development path, rather than an attraction for attendees

#### 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

This section integrates the learning from the research to provide some pointers and recommendations towards an entrepreneurial development strategy for the W&RSETA, based on the model developed in the previous section. It answers the following research question:

- *Contribute towards the development of a strategy for SMMEs, micro-enterprises, informal traders.*

All aspects of the research point towards the need for integrated, holistic entrepreneurial development that includes, rather than is dominated by skills development. The latter should focus on both enterprising and functional (business and technical) skills, and should take place in the context of ongoing mentoring, coaching, and business support. Further, skills development should be specific to the business, and should support the business in the context of its development path. The delivery of generic training programmes is inefficient. Entrepreneurs require development as and when they need it, and development should be re-enforced by practical implementation.

Given its mandate, the W&RSETA has the opportunity to unlock value by re-imagining the way in which it delivers entrepreneurial development programmes. The delivery of holistic, integrated programmes requires that it considers its strengths relative to other stakeholders, and develops appropriate partnerships for impactful delivery. This section summarises, in the context of the above model, the next steps or preliminary roadmap to point the W&RSETA towards implementation. It is proposed that the W&RSETA considers a number of aspects at the strategic, tactical, and operational levels, as outlined below.



Figure 7 Implementation of recommendations

##### ***Strategic: Develop the vision and impact targets***

The W&RSETA needs to respond to the need for entrepreneurial development in the context of its mandate and overall goals. The research indicates that the W&RSETA's current approach to entrepreneurial development of once-off training interventions and pilot projects are disconnected from the need for targeted and holistic entrepreneurial development interventions. To respond to its mandate, a shift is required from the current fragmented approach to integrated, holistic development programmes.

This requires that the W&RSETA:

- (1) defines its overall goals and desired impact with respect to entrepreneurial development;
- (2) reviews the constraints of funding available for entrepreneurial development;
- (3) defines an ideal entrepreneurial development offering within funding constraints; and
- (4) defines its role as a partner and participant in entrepreneurial development within a landscape of other competent and experienced development partners.

In defining goals and impact, the need exists to break overall goals down to the realities of the current status of entrepreneurial development. That is, impact indicators such as job creation should be broken down

along an outcomes chain (or similar construct) to input, output, and outcomes indicators that better reflect and respond to the needs on the ground. The primary objective should be the development of *sustainable, well-functioning* enterprises, which will in turn contribute to secondary objectives such as job creation. With consideration of resource constraints, it is advisable to ringfence development efforts to specific areas and subsectors within which targeted interventions with sustained benefits can be initiated.

***Tactical: partner and design for impact***

Resources for entrepreneurial development is limited and fragmented, while the need is widespread and significant. The opportunity exists to deliver impactful development in partnership with other stakeholders. This involves partnerships at three levels:

- Consultation with sub-sector and regional stakeholders for the design of programmes
- Partnerships with stakeholders who have developed their capability to deliver holistic programmes; and
- Partnerships for the development of a national strategy for SMME development in the W&R sector

First steps in the above process are to:

- (1) Map the landscape of role players who can contribute to the delivery of integrated, holistic SMME development;
- (2) Define workable models of engagement (e.g., what will the role of the W&RSETA be relative to the service providers; establish panel of service providers); and
- (3) Identify and engage stakeholders for the development of a national strategy for retail SMME development

***Operational: Facilitate engagement***

A number of stakeholders have addressed their desire to collaborate with the W&RSETA on entrepreneurial development, but found engagement difficult. The opportunity exists to streamline the interface of stakeholder engagement around entrepreneurial development, with a view of unlocking potential. The same holds for engagement with entrepreneurs, who have expressed similar experiences. Strong delivery models through partnerships could streamline entrepreneurial engagement.

## 5. SUMMARY RESPONSE TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Table 6 summarises the responses to the various research questions, with reference to the sections in the four reports from where the evidence is drawn or where the responses are discussed.

**Table 6 Summary response to research questions**

<i>Research question</i>	<i>Summary response</i>	<i>Reference</i>
<p><b>Definition of resilience and sustainability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are appropriate definitions of resilience and sustainability in this context?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Resilience</b> relates to responses ability to recover from external shocks</p> <p><b>Sustainability</b> relates to the ability to “remain in business”</p>	<p>Section 3.1</p> <p>Phase 1: section 3.2</p>
<p><b>Characteristics of Successful Entrepreneurs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examine the characteristics of successful entrepreneurs across the W&amp;R sector; and</li> <li>Compare successful entrepreneurs in the W&amp;R sector and FoodBev sector</li> </ul>	<p>Successful entrepreneurs are visionary, network for access to resources, are innovative in their responses to adversity, manage operations, and are keen to develop their skills. Characteristics do not seem to differ across sectors, but different characteristics come to the fore in different enterprise growth phases</p>	<p>Section 3.2</p> <p>Phase 1: section 3.3</p> <p>Phase 2: section 3.2</p> <p>Phase 3: section 3.1</p>
<p><b>Skills development and business support needs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine education and training needs for entrepreneurs within the W&amp;R sector</li> </ul>	<p>Skills and business support needs include business management skills, people skills, technical skills, access to resources, and others (see summaries for detail)</p>	<p>Section 3.3</p> <p>Phase 2: section 3.2.1</p> <p>Phase 3: section 3.2</p>
<p><b>Entrepreneurs and technology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How is technology currently used by entrepreneurs;</li> <li>How is technology use contributing to SMME resilience and sustainability; and</li> <li>What are the technology development needs of SMMEs</li> </ul>	<p>Entrepreneurs adopt technology in line with their enterprise growth path and business maturity</p> <p>Technology adoption is relatively broad, but simplistic. Resource availability and connectivity impede adoption</p> <p>Successful entrepreneurs adopt technology for diversification and automation.</p> <p>Technology has been used by successful enterprises to diversify markets facilitate remote work during lockdown</p>	<p>Section 3.4</p> <p>Phase 1: section 3.5</p> <p>Phase 2: section 3.2.3</p> <p>Phase 3: section 3.3</p>
<p><b>Resilience and sustainability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document and understand the theoretical perspectives of how skills support the resilience and longevity of SMEs and micro-enterprises in the W&amp;R sector, especially considering shocks to the W&amp;R system, such as COVID-19 and climate change</li> <li>Engage with stakeholders to understand how education and training can and does equip W&amp;R SMEs and micro-enterprises with knowledge, expertise, skills, and/or competencies required to sustain their businesses/livelihoods and be more resilient in times of uncertainty</li> </ul>	<p><b>Resilient</b> enterprises “bounce back” from adversity, while <b>sustainable</b> enterprises create value for which the market continues to pay (note that resilience can be negative, i.e., when enterprises “bounce back” to undesirable conditions). Both of these aspects are rooted in the establishment of a well-managed enterprise that can generate income and accumulate surplus resources.</p> <p>With some exceptions (e.g., COVID-response) most development programmes do not focus on resilience and sustainability per se, but rather focus on the development of healthy, well-functioning enterprises.</p> <p>As indicated before, key to the development of healthy enterprises are development programmes that include education and training as part of a holistic model of enterprise development, alongside mentoring, coaching, and connecting businesses to resources and network.</p>	<p>Section 3.1</p> <p>Section 3.5</p> <p>Phase 1: section 3.2</p> <p>Phase 2: sections 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4</p> <p>Phase 3: section 3.5</p>
<p><b>A model for entrepreneurial development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an economic entrepreneurial business model;</li> <li>Draw on findings to present insights and learnings on the skills, knowledge, and expertise required to enhance W&amp;R SME and micro-enterprise resilience and sustainability; and</li> <li>Identify case studies to illustrate practice. This can include individuals and/or examples of how VET providers have adequately provided W&amp;R SMEs and micro-enterprises to sustain their business/livelihoods and be more resilient</li> </ul>	<p><b>Why</b></p> <p>Describe impact at the local or sub-sector context, with the aim of developing sustainable, well-functioning enterprises</p> <p><b>What and for whom</b></p> <p>An integrated model that combines skills development with enterprise development. It should support the enterprise growth path, and should include mentoring, coaching, resource access etc.</p> <p><b>How and with whom</b></p> <p>A partnership model should be pursued for delivery. An entrepreneurial selection process is essential, and funding or resource access of entrepreneurs should be aligned with the SMME development progress.</p> <p>Training should be aligned to the SMME’s context (how often, when)</p>	<p>Section 3.6</p>
<p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribute towards the development of a strategy for SMMEs, micro-enterprises, informal traders.</li> </ul>	<p>Recommendations are themed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategic: develop vision and impact targets</li> <li>Tactical: partner for design and impact</li> <li>Operational: Facilitate engagement</li> </ul>	<p>Section 4</p>



## 6. CONCLUSION

The W&RSETA has the mandate and opportunity to contribute to entrepreneurial development by defining its role in collaboration with other stakeholders in the landscape. The message from the research that was conducted to inform the W&RSETA's strategy in this regard is clear: entrepreneurs require holistic, integrated interventions that meet and support them throughout their development path. Differentiation between enterprise growth phases rather than differences across sectors seem relevant.

While access to resources is a key consideration, financial and other resource-related support should in itself be sustainable and catalytic. It should enable rather than burden SMMEs and, at the same time, should not be once-off, unmonitored grants that have limited impact.

Entrepreneurs are either using technology efficiently, or are expressing a keen interest in developing ICT-related skills. However, as for general support, technology needs should be relevant to the specific conditions within which the enterprise finds itself. This implies that access to ICT resources, connectivity, support, and others should be considered. A *context-specific definition of the application of 4IR* would go a long way towards ICT adoption and skills development for impact in the resource-constrained environment where SMMEs find themselves.

The recommendations made in this document hinge strongly on the idea that the W&RSETA defines its role and contribution relative to other stakeholders, and then enters into partnerships to deliver holistic entrepreneurial development programmes. The stakeholders in development programmes who were interviewed have over time evolved their programmes towards impact, and are keen for collaboration with the W&RSETA to deliver integrated programmes, while also being keen to contribute to a national perspective on entrepreneurial and SMME development in the sector. In parallel with such a strategic shift, it is proposed that the W&RSETA explores opportunities to develop stakeholder-friendly interfaces and engagements.

### **Limitations**

The study was conducted within a limited time frame and over the year-end period, which somewhat impacted stakeholder engagement. While care was taken to develop and integrate as many perspectives as possible, and to include alternative instruments such as online surveys to extend the reach of the study, the results remain exploratory rather than in-depth – that is, a full picture of exact entrepreneurial support preferences, technology requirements, financial support requirements across the enterprise growth path was not developed. This was by design outside of the scope of this work.

Regardless, the research results, as triangulated across data collection instruments, consistently converged and provided a good basis from which to develop recommendations.

### **Future work**

The responses to the research questions and recommendations summarised in this document are intended as pointers to consider in strategy development. Future work may want to use these findings as a strategic baseline from which to define research questions to inform practical implementation. These could include the development of feasible impact parameters within available budgets, models for collaborative delivery of entrepreneurial development, and targeted models of funding support for specific initiatives and areas.

The enthusiasm and hunger of entrepreneurs to develop their own futures, and the willingness and need expressed by various stakeholders to collaborate with the W&RSETA towards entrepreneurial and SMME development, underscore the opportunity that is available to make an impact.

## REFERENCES

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## APPENDIX A Characteristics of successful entrepreneurs

**Table A.1 Comparing characteristics from theoretical and empirical work**

Characteristics identified from literature (see Phase 2 report)		Characteristics that emerged from interviews		
		Successful entrepreneurs	Entrepreneurs in general	Informal traders
Strategy & vision	Long-Term Focus / Vision	Vision-driven	Vision-driven, believe that small things can turn into big things	Strategy
	Goal mindset	Focus on the business	Belief in future success	
	Passion	Belief in product		
Exploring opportunities & partnerships	Curiosity / seek opportunities	New offerings and channels in response to lockdown challenges	Diversify during lockdown	
	Team builder / collaborative	Integrity in dealing with business and team members	Selfless leadership, open to criticism, people management	Leadership, people skills, relationship building
	Ability to network	Partnerships to secure resources	Secure resources from family and friends; collaborate with various institutions	Grow client base Engaging with suppliers and stakeholders Communication
	Persuasiveness	Good marketing skill	Innovative marketing skills	Persuasiveness, marketing
	Motivation / drive	Motivation, self-drive, taking ownership in adversity	Self-drive and ownership	Getting out of comfort zone
	Risk tolerance	Risk-taking based on good business principles	See risks as a means to grow and learn	
Operations	Hard-working	Willing to sacrifice, discipline	Willing to sacrifice	Work ethic, hard working
	Ability to complete tasks	Combined with management skills (time, resource, financial management)	Social and financial discipline	
	Decisiveness / decision maker	Timing of turnaround strategies	Mental strength, emotional balance	Decision-making, problem solving
Continuous renewal & survival	Versatility / willingness to learn	Ongoing self-development (often through YouTube and similar)	Learn from online sources	Ability to learn
	Adaptability / flexibility	Invaluable in managing lockdown-related and other challenges	Seek opportunities to diversify, finding new ways of doing business	Critical thinking
	Innovative / creativity			
Competitiveness	Expressed in terms of marketing ability	Seek information to position relative to competitors		
Resilience & sustainability	Self-reliance	Taking ownership for success	Belief in self rather than others, fear of failure	Ownership of own shop/ premises
	Self-confidence	Confidence (arrogance) in marketing product		
	Optimism	Saw opportunities that arose from lockdown	Optimistic that success will be achieved	
	Comfortable with failure	Linked to taking risks	Linked to taking risks	Getting out of comfort zone
	Persistence / tenacity	Endurance, tenacity	Endurance	

Sources: adapted from <sup>1</sup>Bortz (n.d.), <sup>2</sup>Centre for Economic and Financial Education (n.d.), <sup>3</sup>Indeed Editorial Team (2021), <sup>4</sup>Miller (2020), <sup>5</sup>Rojas (2021) AND empirical work summarised in Phase 3 report