

Invitation to two Research-led Skills Dialogues

Strengthening Industry Engagement for Training

Centre for Researching Education and Labour

30th January and 27th February 2026

Dialogue Aims

Many aspects of our skills systems don't work well. Can we improve how our systems meet industry needs through better collective engagement of industry leaders (industry associations and unions)? Join us for a focused discussion to engage with insights from research and stakeholder perspectives.

International research suggests that sectoral bodies for coordinating training are important. Industry-wide coordination is needed to build training for broad occupational capacity for current and future workplace needs. We need them to build coordination between industry associations, employers and unions as well as between government and industry players (employers and unions), to build the long term availability of skilled, adaptable people to the economy as a whole. We need sectoral bodies to build education providers with institutional capacity to respond to changing market and production conditions.

The REAL Centre *Research-led Skills Dialogues* bring together researchers, policy makers, employers, workers, and education institutions, to explore meaningful solutions based on insights from systematic research into the problems facing our skills systems. The first Dialogue focuses on industry concerns with the current systems, including the view expressed by some industry representatives that the old Industry Training Boards served them better than the current systems. The second Dialogue will focus on improving workplace skills planning and funding to support training, as well as how SETAs can best be structured to support skills planning and provision.

Dialogue Format

The one day invitational dialogue, hosted by the REAL Centre, Wits University, will share key research findings into some of the vexing troubled areas of our systems, and provide a platform for key industry actors to table concerns, reach agreements, and isolate areas of disagreement.

Please share experiences, good or bad, in relation to the issue of Industry Training Boards as well as other concerns with the skills levy system, by the 20th January 2026, by filling in a short questionnaire (5 to 10 minutes of your time). [Click here to fill it in.](#)

Please join the discussion if you have examples to share of good practices from an industry association that leads training in a sector, a SETA with good practices in terms of engaging with industry, an industry association that feels frustrated with the current systems, an industry association that preferred the old Industry Training Board model, or a union that has particular experiences to share, positive or negative.

RSVP is essential, [Click here to RSVP](#), or email Cynthia Mangena by 20th January 2026, on Cynthia.mangena@wits.ac.za, please indicate name, organization, number of delegates that you would like to bring, and whether or not you want to make a formal presentation. The REAL Centre will confirm with participants, as space is limited. Final venue at Wits University will also be confirmed. There will be an option to join the meeting online.

Provisional Programme for Dialogue One

- 11:00: Welcome and overview of priorities for the Dialogues
Advisor to the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Mr Oupa Bodibe.
Chair: Prof Presha Ramsarup, Director, REAL Centre
- 11:15 – 12:10 Presentation of key research findings in relation to industry engagement
Prof Stephanie Allais, Research Chair of Skills Development
Chair: DHET Acting DDG for Skills Branch, Mr David Mabusela
- 12:10 – 13:30 Short presentations on key concerns, from industry associations and union representatives, as well as synthesis of submissions received prior to Dialogue.
Speakers to be confirmed
Chair: Carmel Marock, REAL Centre
- 13:30 – 14:15 Lunch
- 14:15 – 14:45 Identification of key issues for deliberation.
Chair: Carmel Marock, REAL Centre
- 14:45 – 16:00 Structured discussions on key identified issues, led by members of the REAL Centre team (eg. the role of industry associations in relation to SETAs, strengthening industry voice, industry-led provision models)
- 16:00 – 17:00 Wrap up: Identification of key areas of agreement and disagreement
Welcome to the Minister of Higher Education and Training Mr Buti Manamela: Wits Vice Chancellor Prof Zeblon Vilekazi

Presentation of key areas of agreement and disagreement: Prof Stephanie Allais

Response from Minister of Higher Education and Training.
Chair: Dr Yende, Chairperson, SETA CEO forum
- 17:00 Refreshments