

Call for Expression of Interest: Specialised Research Leadership Chairs - Advancing Research Excellence in the Wholesale and Retail Sector

1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The Wholesale and Retail Sector Education and Training Authority (W&RSETA) invites expressions of interest (EOIs) from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, and Community Education and Training (CET) colleges for the establishment of Research Leadership Chairs under a newly designed model. This Expression of interest and initiative is aimed at driving innovation, addressing emerging challenges, and fostering transformation within the wholesale and retail sector.

Launching in the 2026/27 financial year, this initiative will establish Research Leadership Chairs in the Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. The new model is designed to enhance research capacity, strengthen industry collaboration, and build sustainable research ecosystems by integrating TVET and CET institutions alongside HEIs. The newly established Research Leadership Chairs are aimed to rotate among HEIs every three years, ensuring diverse academic perspectives while progressively empowering HEI, TVET and CET colleges to develop research autonomy.

Hence it is desirable that applying institutions should present an application that reflects their affiliation and collaboration between CET, TVET and HEI.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE INITIATIVE

The new Research Leadership Chair model seeks to:

- Advance cutting-edge research initiatives aligned with the W&RSETA's Sector Skills Plan (SSP) priorities.
- Strengthen research collaboration between HEIs, TVET, and CET colleges.
- Build research capacity within TVET and CET institutions, enabling them to transition into independent research entities.
- Foster inclusive research ecosystems that address socio-economic and industry-specific challenges.
- Establish Wholesale and Retail Centres of Excellence to integrate research with skills development and workforce readiness.
- Ensure that all research reports are published in DHET accredited journals to contribute towards sustainability of the Research Chair.

Key thematic areas for research include entrepreneurship, innovation, and community development, with a focus on solutions that promote sectoral transformation.

3. BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:

3.1. Successful institutions will benefit from:

- Funding for research projects aligned with sectoral transformation.
- The allocation of bursaries for postgraduate students and early-career researchers.
- The establishment of Postdoctoral fellowships to strengthen research capacity.
- International exchange programmes for global research collaboration.
- Accessing opportunities to shape transformative research that drives sectoral growth and competitiveness.

3.2. It is important to note that the participation of either successful institution will attract a once-off grant funding from the W&RSETA which will enable them to undertake the research initiatives allocated.

4. CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPATION

To ensure the participation the applying Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) must:

- Demonstrated research excellence and institutional readiness.
- Have a proven track record in industry collaboration and research impact.
- Have capacity to mentor and support TVET and CET colleges in developing research & innovation capabilities.

To ensure the participation the applying TVET Colleges must:

- Demonstrate commitment to developing their research capacity aligned with wholesale and retail sector priorities.
- No prior research experience is required; however, a clear plan for research engagement and industry collaboration is essential.

To ensure the participation the applying CET Colleges must:

- Demonstrate Innovative strategies for integrating community-driven research initiatives with wholesale and retail sector priorities.
- Demonstrate Institutional commitment to progressively developing research capacity.

5. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS:

Interested institutions should only submit electronically an EOI to Senior Specialist: Research and Innovation Mr Thabang Motsoeneng at TMotsoeneng@wrseta.org.za by **31 March 2026**. No other forms of submission(s) will be accepted.

Submissions must include:

5.1. Research Focus and Alignment that:

- Outline an area of specialisation aligned to sector priorities and National imperatives.
- Provides a description of the proposed research areas in response to key thematic areas outlined above.
- Clearly demonstrates how the research addresses the wholesale and retail sector's needs and contributes to W&RSETA's strategic objectives.
- Explains how the research will drive innovation and contribute to sectoral transformation.

5.2. Institutional Readiness that:

- Outlines the available infrastructure, faculty expertise, and leadership support to enable successful research execution.
- Demonstrates the institution's commitment to the success of the Research Leadership Chair initiative, showcasing readiness to contribute to research capacity development.

5.3. Sustainability Plan that:

- Presents a strategy for sustaining the research initiative beyond the initial funding period.
- Highlights potential additional funding sources and long-term partnerships that will ensure the continuity of research outcomes.

5.4. Preferred Application Type that:

- Indicates whether the institution is applying independently (inclusive of TVET & CET partnership) or as part of a joint provincial application.
- For joint applications, ensures clarity in defining roles, responsibilities, and expected contributions.

NB: Flexible Application Models:

For Individual Applications:

- Institutions applying independently should emphasize unique strengths and readiness. The W&RSETA will facilitate partnerships by pairing institutions with complementary capabilities.
- Minimum collaborative requirement will consist of an HEI, TVET and CET as one application.

For Joint Provincial Applications:

Institutions within the same province are encouraged to collaborate on a single application, leveraging regional strengths and expertise. Clearly define roles and responsibilities to ensure transparency.

Selection Process and Criteria:

EOIs will be evaluated based on the following:

- a) Alignment with the Criteria for Participation.
- b) Alignment with W&RSETA's strategic objectives (Area of specialisation).
- c) Institutional readiness.
- d) Sustainability plans.
- e) Strong TVET and CET Collaboration.
- f) Clarity in application type.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to present their full proposals.

NB: The W&RSETA reserves the right not to make any appointment in response to this Expression of Interest and may withdraw or cancel the process at its discretion.

For inquiries, contact **Thabang Motsoeneng** at : TMotsoeneng@wrseta.org.za