



TO:	EDUCATION AND TRAINING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROVIDERS
REF:	NSF External Circular 1 of 2020/21

NSF RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN: PUBLIC COVID-19 COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN FOR THE POST-SCHOOL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1. As South Africa enters the extended two-week nationwide lockdown to curb the spread of the coronavirus (Covid-19), government continues to escalate measures including those aimed at controlling the infection rate, testing, informing and educating the public about Covid-19.
- 1.2. As indicated by President Cyril Ramaphosa in his address to the nation on the Covid-19 pandemic on Thursday, 9 April 2020, the focus of the coming days is on evaluating how to embark on risk-adjusted measures that can enable a phased recovery of the economy, allowing the return to operation of certain sectors under strictly controlled conditions. This will include ramping up public health interventions to slow down and reduce infections, amongst other interventions.
- 1.3. In complying with the National State of Disaster and directives from the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology in dealing with the Covid-19 threat in the post-school education and training (PSET) environment, the National Skills Fund (NSF) issued circulars to skills development providers (SDPs) implementing NSF-funded learning programmes. NSF Circulars No. 7 and No. 11 of 2019/20 are attached as **Annexures A and B**, respectively.



- 1.4. The Department of Higher Education and Training has entered into a partnership with Higher Health (formerly HEAIDS) to develop skills support programmes and strengthen core systems of PSET institutions in managing and mitigating the causes, challenges and consequences of HIV/STI/TB, sexual reproductive health, gender-based violence and other health and wellness factors affecting the student community.
- 1.5. The partnership, funded through the NSF, has now been extended to deal with Covid-19 matters among the PSET community of more than 2.5 million beneficiaries. As much as Higher Health has innately focused on the university and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sectors, its Covid-19 communication strategy includes community education and training (CET) colleges as well as workplace-based learning programmes.
- 1.6. NSF-funded education and training beneficiaries and skills development providers (SDPs) are part of the PSET system. The NSF has formally agreed with Higher Health to extend its scope to NSF project sites, beneficiaries and SDPs.
- 1.7. The mass communication campaign being rolled out by Higher Health to all PSET institutions is aimed at reaching at least one million young people during and after the lockdown. The campaign, supported by the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) and Department of Health (DOH), focusses on the following:
 - 1.7.1. Dissemination of information on the virus/disease, protection, myths and reliable contacts/sources of information through SMS, MMS and WhatsApp.
 - 1.7.2. Use of webinars to empower students and staff to cover issues such as case notifications and linkage to care, myths, stigma and prevention guidelines, recommendations for self-isolation/self-quarantine and the latest government guidelines and protocols.
 - 1.7.3. Mobilising the participation of students and PSET role-players in Higher Health's capacity-building webinars and other interventions including peer to peer programmes to be implemented post lockdown.



- 1.7.4. Higher Health, together with NICD and the departments of Higher Education and Training and Health, has published an updated set of PSET sectoral guidelines on Covid-19 to enable institutions to create and implement their plans in synergy with the policies of government (**Annexure C**).
- 1.8. The NSF is engaging Higher Health to ensure that the PSET Covid-19 communication campaign reaches NSF education and training beneficiaries and SDPs.

2. NOTICE TO SDPs

- 2.1. The NSF has used SDP performance information reports for quarter 3 (October to December 2019) to develop a database of contact details of NSF beneficiaries and project learning sites.
- 2.2. The NSF notifies SDPs that their beneficiary contact information will be shared with Higher Health for no other reason but to administer the SMS, MMS and WhatsApp drive and other Covid-19 specific communication activities.
- 2.3. As contained in the data-sharing agreement between the NSF and Higher Health attached as **Annexure D**, Higher Health is expected to protect all personal information it handles under the agreement and to comply with the provisions of the Protection of Personal Information Act No. 4 of 2013 (“the POPI Act”) as amended.



3. ROUTINE PERFORMANCE REPORTING PROCESS APPLIES

- 3.1. For the communication rollout, the NSF will first refer to beneficiary contacts submitted in the Quarter 3 2019/20 Performance Information Report (October to December 2019).
- 3.2. SDPs that have not submitted the Quarter 3 Performance Information Report should follow the standard process of submitting reports. The performance information reports must be submitted to the relevant NSF Project Manager or Regional/Programme Director.
- 3.3. As the NSF will continue the partnership with Higher Health post the Covid-19 lockdown, SDPs are encouraged to update their Quarter 4 Performance Information Report and submit to the relevant NSF Project Manager or Regional/Programme Director by the due date, 15 April 2020.
- 3.4. This includes paying particular attention to updated cell phone numbers and email addresses of all beneficiaries in the Quarter 4 Performance Information Report for the NSF to extend the benefits of the Covid-19 additional measures being implemented by the NSF through Higher Health. Learning site details to include physical addresses and GPS coordinates.

4. ENQUIRIES

- 4.1. Enquiries regarding the beneficiary contact information required for the Covid-19 communication campaign must be directed to Public Relations and Communication for the attention of Ms Khanyisa Ngewu at nsf@dhet.gov.za.
- 4.2. Enquiries relating to performance information reports must be directed to your Project Manager or Programme/Regional Director.



Thanking you for your cooperation in ensuring that our beneficiaries are empowered with the right information and that we begin to create environments that show the responsiveness of the skills system amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr MV Macikama

NSF Executive Officer

Date: 15 April 2020