

SKILLS AND TRAINING FOR SOLAR TECHNICIANS



FACT SHEET

FACTS ABOUT THE GPG – merSETA SOLAR INSTALLATION TRAINING PROGRAMME

1. The GPG – merSETA Partnership

The Gauteng Provincial Government (GPG), in partnership with the Manufacturing, Engineering, and Related Services Sector Education and Training Authority (merSETA) have established a training and skills development programme aimed at empowering young people with skills in the energy sector. The programme is in response to the country's energy crisis and youth unemployment.

The programme was first mentioned in the February 2023 State of the Province Address wherein the Premier outlined the Gauteng Government's intention to ensure that young people are trained, skilled, and equipped in the energy space. This was further discussed at the province's inaugural Energy Expo which saw various captains of industry in the energy and finance sector converge under one roof to discuss ways to turn the energy crisis into a new economy for the province whilst creating much-needed employment opportunities for the youth.

2. The skills gap in the sector

According to Quantec and Trade Map, which provides Economic and Financial Data, in 2022, South Africa imported R5,6 billion worth of solar panels and modules, as well as batteries. In the first Quarter of 2023, South Africa imported R3,6 billion worth of solar panels, batteries, and modules. Ideally these should be manufactured locally. This does however attest to the need for installation, maintenance, and repair skills.

South African Photovoltaic Industry Association (SAPVIA), a member-led organisation that promotes collaboration and sharing of best practices in the Solar PV Industry, recently commissioned the CSIR to produce a Solar PV Industry Jobs Report. The purpose of the study was to look at the number and the types of job opportunities, created by Solar PV Deployment in South Africa. The Report indicated that all forms of renewable energy, including Hydro, Gas, wind – Solar PV deployment had the highest job growth potential.

3. What the training will entail

The training will provide learners with credit-bearing programmes on solar photovoltaic microgrids. The training will cover areas such as installation, maintenance, and repair of different aspects related to solar energy concentrating on hybrid SPV systems. The training will also provide learn-

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ers with business and entrepreneurial skills designed to help them to start new businesses in the growing energy sector.

The training programme will have 2 elements, the first being basic and is for the installation, maintenance and repair of the different aspects related to solar energy, focusing on hybrid SPV systems. The second element is for a more advanced and will be targeted to youth who want to embark on a green economy-related career. It will lead to an energy efficiency audit technician qualification and will require a base level of study, i.e., BTech or equivalent. The qualification is authorised by the sector and is an NQF level 5 qualification.

4. The duration of the Project and training

The Project will be implemented over a three-year period (36 months), with an intake of 6000 learners. These will not be trained all at once – they will be taken as different cohorts.

The project will provide both theoretical and practical or in-service training. The theoretical part will be between 8-12 weeks to develop technical skills. This will be complemented by a 6-8 months' work experiential learning, where candidates will be given practical work experience.

5. Qualification criteria

South African youth (under the age of 35 years) are eligible to apply and are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity. Applicants must have matriculated in a Gauteng school after 2016. N3+ electrical qualification from a TVET college, and/or technical matric is an added advantage. Ideally, applicants must also have an interest in a career in energy efficiency, electrical work, and the green economy sector.

The learners will be given a stipend of R4000 for the duration of the training.

APPLICATION PROCESS:

The application process commences on Monday 8 May and will close on 8 June 2023.

Applicants can send their CV, ID copy, copy of qualification certificates, and proof of residence to:

Mobi site: SAyouth.mobi

Email address: GCRA.wfd@gauteng.gov.za

6. Industry Involvement

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South African Photovoltaic Industry Association (SAPVIA), a member-led organisation that promotes collaboration and sharing of best practices in the Solar PV Industry, is one of the key partners of the programme. The completion of the training will allow candidates to register with SAPVIA to get their green card status.

7. Capacity to train

There are discussions with TVET colleges and universities to increase capacity to train. There is also a discussion with the private trainers through SAPVIA to support the capacity of TVETs to deliver. It is only through TVET colleges that training can be massified. Private providers train small numbers, the largest being up to 20 candidates. This will not enable a massive training that enables availability of a pool of skilled human capacity.

Therefore, the 6000 will not all be trained at the same time. Training will take place in cohorts. The first cohort will be processed in June, they will be in training for a period of about 8-12 weeks. Thereafter, they will go for practical training with host employers. As soon as the theoretical component is completed, the second cohort will be onboarded, who will also go through the same process, i.e., 8-12 weeks theory, then practical experience. Total investment of the programme is R175 million.

8. Implementation of the Programme

The programme will be implemented in all five corridors of Gauteng through the Gauteng City Region Academy (GCRA). The GCRA accompanied by the various training providers will go to the various regions to ensure that young people are able to apply online on the spot. Thereafter, the applications will be processed and those who have been successfully shortlisted will be announced in each Region and be readied to start the program. Young people will first go through a 'boot camp' of earning and learning opportunities readiness to ensure that they are committed and based on their performance at the Readiness Bootcamp, will be taken to the training programme to start.

PARTNERS ALREADY ON BOARD

- University of Johannesburg
- Ekurhuleni West TVET College
- Tshwane TVET College- pending accreditation
- SAPVIA – Industry Association
- SANDF