THE SABPP™
FACT SHEET

2023

SETTING STANDARDS FOR OUR EVOLVING CONTEXT:

REVISING THE HRM SYSTEM MODEL AND STANDARDS

Introduction

The SABPP, as the HR professional body, continues its journey to set standards for people practices in organisations and to professionalise HR and people management. This journey began in 2013 with the launch of the HR Management System Standards Model and the SABPP National HR Management Standard (HRMS). This initiative brought together the HR community to define the body of knowledge of, and standards of good practice for, the profession. The first section of this Fact Sheet outlines the context and journey undertaken in 2013 and the development of the System Model and HRMS. The second section then discusses why there was a need to review the HRMS as well as the continuing importance of setting good people practices. The review culminated in the launch of the revised HRMS on 6 September 2023, which is renamed as the National People Practices and Governance Standard (PPGS) and with it the System Model is renamed as the People Practices System Standard Model. This given the evolving context, discourse, practices, and increasing trend to rename HR as the people function as will be discussed below.

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First edition of National Standards: HRM Standards (2013/14)

Why was there a need to develop and launch the HRM Standards in 2013/14?

Firstly, we can consider the global context then. Against the background of existing and developing management standards, such as the Organization for Standardization's (ISO) principles of quality management and related standards, there was a gap identified within the field of HRM at the time. There were no global standards of quality for HRM practices and outcomes (Meyer and Abbott, 2019[1]). In fact, there was no global consensus on what should inform the standards and the approach to develop these. Refer to Meyer et al for the contrast between the US, UK, and other European countries' approaches to standards.

Secondly, we need to consider the local and organisational contexts. There were no national or regional standards for HRM practices in African countries that speak to their lived realities and contexts. During the roadshows undertaken by the SABPP in 2012 across South Africa (SA), the following issues were identified by the HR community regarding their organisational and local contexts:

- inconsistencies in practices within organisations and across organisations

- many bad and unethical examples of HRM practices

- widespread need to improve the quality of HRM practice and outcomes thereof across organisations

- no clear understanding and measure of what good HR is within the SA HR community

- no shared understanding or clear standards to define the field and profession of HRM within the SA HR community

The SABPP National HRM Standard (HRMS) was developed to serve as the professional grounding for the HR community and uplift the HRM practices and outcomes in South Africa. The HRMS was developed by HR professionals for the HR profession, through a series of consultative workshops. The HRMS is based on a conceptual model, the HR Management Systems Model. The Model integrates all the various aspects of HR work and people management and structures these in terms of the phases of quality management practice: prepare, implement, review, and improve phases. The HRMS also provides a framework to integrate the fields of academia, research, and practice. Many universities have adapted their curricula to include or be based on the Standards. Below the development of the HRMS is illustrated along with the later development of Professional Practice Standards that further elaborates on the 'what' and 'how' of the HRMS.
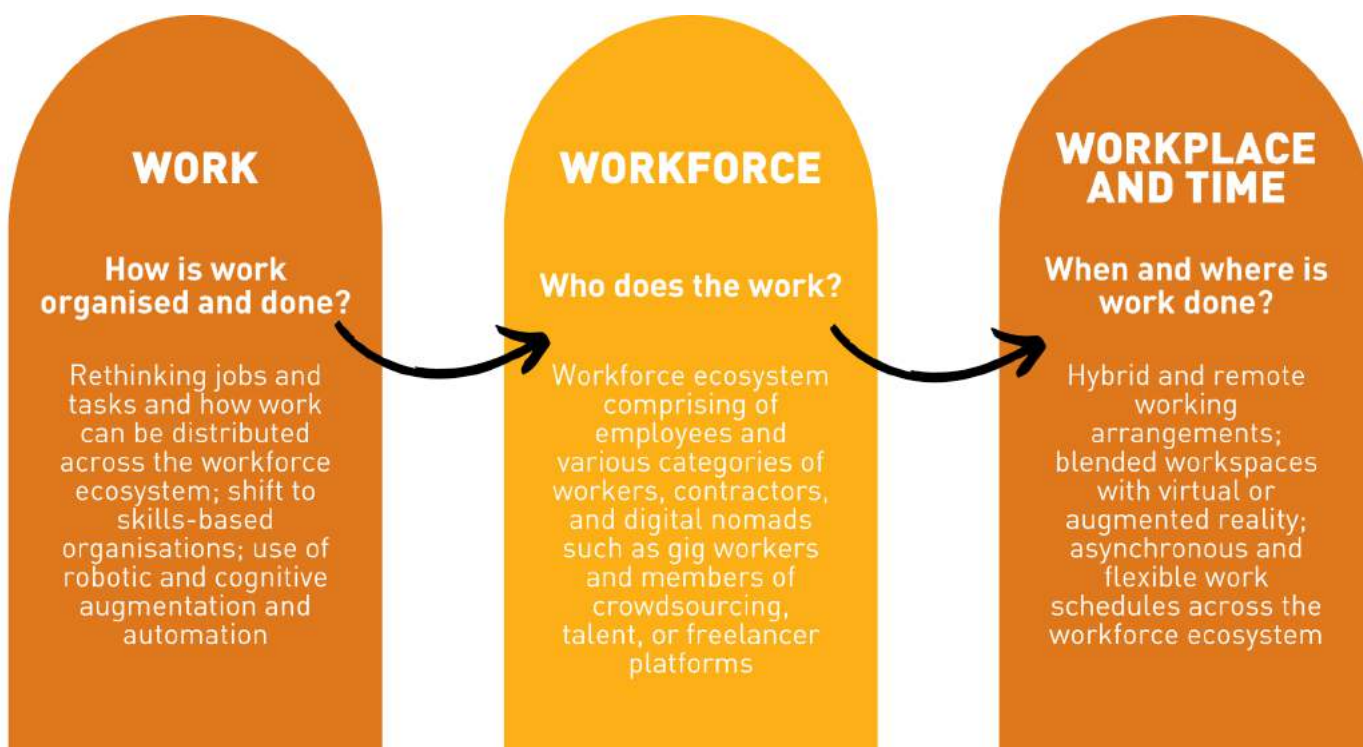

HR STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT

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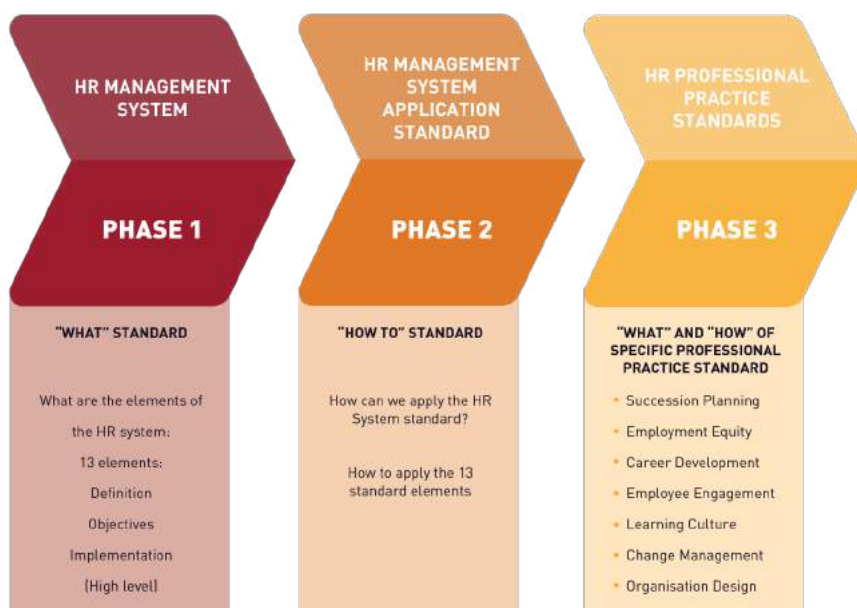
1. Meyer, M., and Abbott, P. (2019). National HRM Standards for South Africa. Setting Professional Standards for Practice. Roodepoort: SABPP.

Second edition of National Standards: People Practices and Governance Standards (2023)

In the decade from the launch in 2013, the HRMS has increasingly been adopted in both industry and academia. During this time our global and local contexts and the world of work has evolved and continues to evolve, with significant changes to work, the workplace and the workforce. Some examples of these changes are outlined in the diagram below. We can also note that our terminologies are also changing – for example, the shift from 'HR function' to 'people function' and from Chief HR Officer to Chief People Officer.
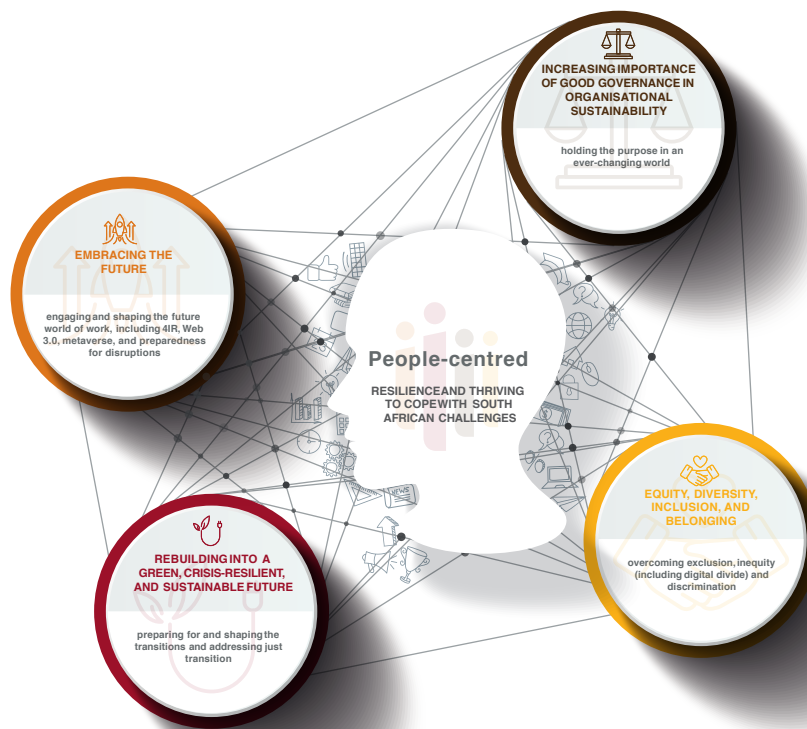
The pandemic has accelerated certain of these changes, but we see many organisations struggling with navigating and adapting to these in terms of developing long-term organisational design and development solutions. Here one could consider the debates and conflicts on the 'return to office' mandates by employers – which has now even gained the acronym 'RTO' – where there is desire to return to the pre-COVID pandemic status quo.

WORK

How is work organised and done?

Rethinking jobs and tasks and how work can be distributed across the workforce ecosystem; shift to skills-based organisations; use of robotic and cognitive augmentation and automation

WORKFORCE

Who does the work?

Workforce ecosystem comprising of employees and various categories of workers, contractors, and digital nomads such as gig workers and members of crowdsourcing, talent, or freelancer platforms

WORKPLACE AND TIME

When and where is work done?

Hybrid and remote working arrangements; blended workspaces with virtual or augmented reality; asynchronous and flexible work schedules across the workforce ecosystem

Source: Adapted from **Jivan (2023)**

As the SABPP, we identified the need to respond strategically to these changes and to ensure that the organisation's duty of care to employees and the broader stakeholders, as per the King Code of good governance for example, is implemented. To take account of the many changes over the period to the external and internal contexts of HR work and changes within the HR profession, the review of the HRMS was formally launched in 2022 following approval by the SABPP Board. Consultative workshops and specialist working groups helped review the HRMS approach and the contents of each Standard to determine to what extent good practice had actually changed over the decade and how we should position the Standards in the new world of work. The review addressed the question of how we can understand our evolving context and the new world of work and how we continue to set standards of good people practices for this context and world of work. We developed a framework of people strategy themes to help HR practitioners navigate and make sense of the evolving context and new world of work. The framework is illustrated below. As can be seen in the illustration, the 'centre of gravity' of the four themes is being people centered as we embrace the future and consider the purpose, governance, diversity, inclusion, belonging, resilience, and sustainability of our organisations.

6. Arthur, M. B. (2014). The boundaryless career at 20: Where do we stand, and where can we go? Career Development International, 19(6), 627-640.
   Arnold, J. (2011). 21st century career concepts: Magic, measurement, and career capital. The Psychologist, 21(2), 106-109.

People-centred

RESILIENCE AND THRIVING TO COPE WITH SOUTH AFRICAN CHALLENGES

INCREASING IMPORTANCE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE IN ORGANISATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

holding the purpose in an ever-changing world

EMBRACING THE FUTURE

engaging and shaping the future world of work, including 4IR, Web 3.0, metaverse, and preparedness for disruptions

REBUILDING INTO A GREEN, CRISIS-RESILIENT, AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

preparing for and shaping the transitions and addressing just transition

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING

overcoming exclusion, inequity (including digital divide) and discrimination

As we identify the above themes, we also recognise that the global environment or context has been variously described, from **VUCA** (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) to **BANI** (brittle, anxious, non-linear, and incomprehensible).Perhaps for a more nuanced approach that speaks to our purposes and the various situational and contextual realities within organisations, we could utilise the Cynefin framework which is illustrated in the below diagram. The framework helps us differentiate and think about contexts in terms of the relationship between cause and effect. This can then inform the way we make decisions and where we can locate best, good, emerging, and novel people practices. For example, differentiating obvious and clear linear relationship between cause and effect where there are known knowns and best practice is applicable versus good practice that is required in contexts where causality can be known but there are variations depending on the situational factors. The Cynefin framework reinforces the point on why we need to set standards of good people practice in our evolving context and world of work. For a discussion on the framework refer to the **June 2020 Fact Sheet.**

Source: Cynefin Company (2019**³**)

7. See the June 2020 Fact Sheet on **HR's role in shaping leadership in the new normal.**
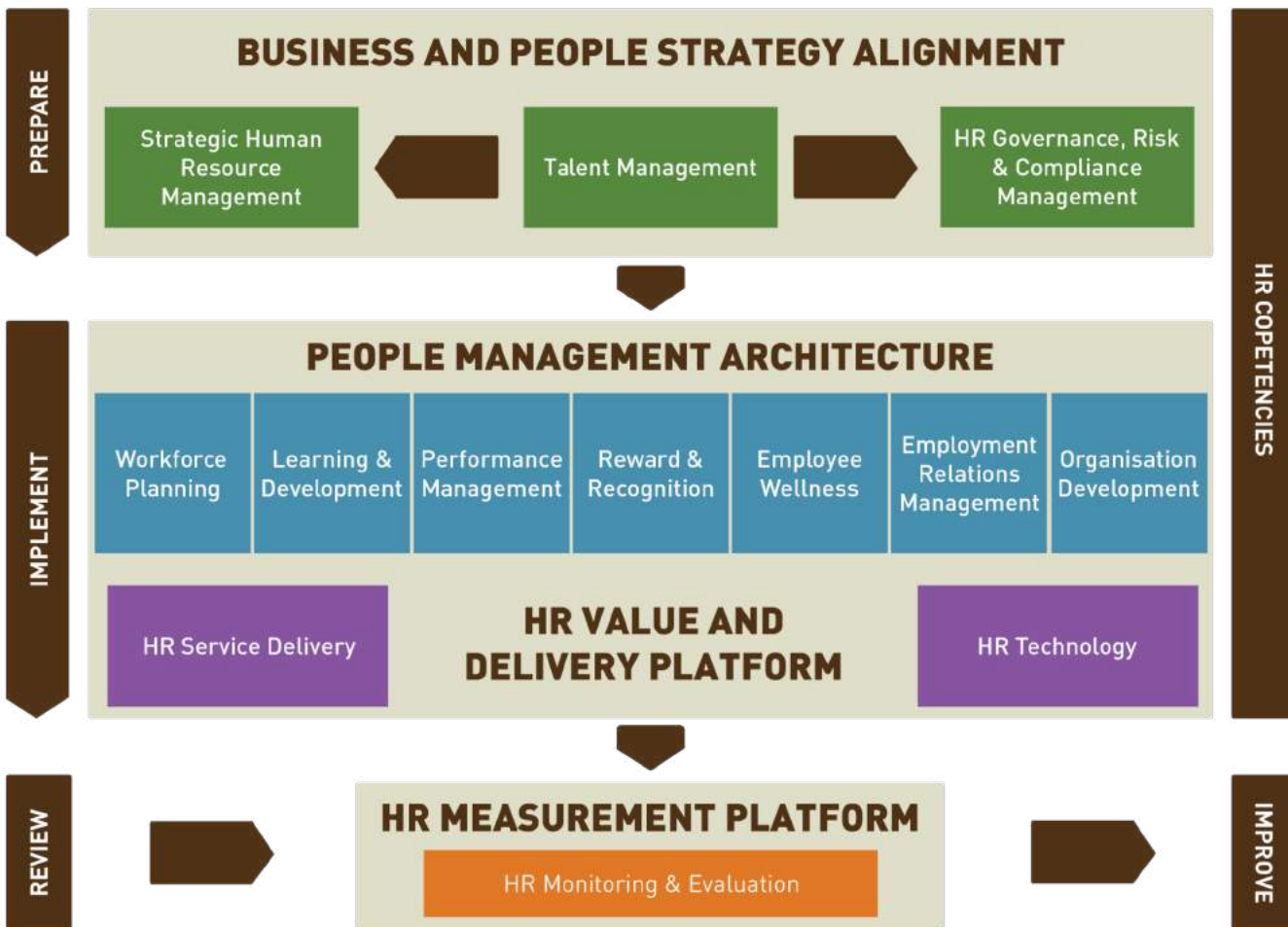8. **https://thecynefin.co/cynefin-as-of-st-davids-day-2019/**

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As a result of the review of our evolving context, world of work and terminologies, the title of the System Model and Standards has been updated to the **SABPP People Practices System Model** and the **People Practices and Governance Standard** (PPGS) respectively. This change underlines the nature of HR work in formulating and supporting people management and empowerment practices across the organisation. Below the revised Model is presented and thereafter the updates to the Standard.

PEOPLE PRACTICES SYSTEM STANDARDS MODEL

PREPARE

BUSINESS AND PEOPLE STRATEGY ALIGNMENT

Strategic Human Resource Management

Talent Management

HR Governance, Risk & Compliance Management

IMPLEMENT

PEOPLE MANAGEMENT ARCHITECTURE

Workforce Planning | Learning & Development | Performance Management | Reward & Recognition | Employee Wellness | Employment Relations Management | Organisation Development

HR Service Delivery

HR VALUE AND DELIVERY PLATFORM

HR Technology

REVIEW

HR MEASUREMENT PLATFORM

HR Monitoring & Evaluation

IMPROVE

HR COPETENCIES

The review resulted in important updates to the Definitions, Objectives, Process Flows and Application Standards. Below we briefly outline what informed the updates:

♞	**Strategic HRM**	The importance of navigating our evolving context in a systematic and critical manner and responding strategically to the significant changes in work, the workplace, and the workforce. Emphasis on ensuring that the organisation's duty of care to employees and stakeholders is implemented. Introduction of the concept of the HR Maturity Model in understanding the stage of development of the organisation's HR or people function.
🔍	**Talent Management**	Clarification of the wider scope of talent management today in that not only employees should be considered but also all the other ways in which work can be rendered (such as gig work) and the wider talent ecosystems (such as external talent or freelancer platforms) that can be developed and tapped into.
⚡	**Governance, Risk and Compliance Management**	Having successfully introduced the concept of HR Risk Management a decade ago, we now need to position it in the wider concept of governance, risk, and compliance management (GRC). These three concepts of GRC are aspects of oversight and an organisation's journey toward achieving an ethical culture and are typically grouped together. This also allows us to put more emphasis on aspects of ethics.
👥	**Workforce Planning**	Emphasis on the need to be able to respond to dynamic changes in the organisation and the labour market, considering workforce ecosystems, but still systematically translate organisation workforce requirements into having the right people and skills in place at the right time and place.
🏅	**Learning and Development**	A substantial revision in the Standard to bring in the need for a proactive L&D strategy which recognises the systemic nature of L&D, the need to be evidence-driven, the need to use technology appropriately and the need to position L&D more widely than simply skills based, towards improving individuals' and organisations' capabilities for the future.
📈	**Performance Management**	Emphasis on including behaviours as performance drivers, the need for performance management to be a daily management practice where line managers serve as performance coaches, and the need to balance individual and team KPIs.
🏆	**Reward and Recognition**	Emphasis on an appropriate reward and recognition strategy looking not only at task performance but also organisational values and citizenship, and fair practices which balance stakeholder needs.
🍎	**Wellness**	Identified the need to position wellness more widely, incorporating wellbeing. Brought in the need to be proactive, based on analytics and addressing employees not just surviving but thriving both at work and in their environment.

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	Employment Relations Management	Emphasis on understanding and formulating approaches to shifting stakeholder groupings and interests, and the need to develop and report on – using meaningful indicators of - the state of employment relationships.
	Organisation Development	Emphasis on looking at the organisation as a whole system in conditions of rapid change, and the need to consider an employee as a whole person, not just a performance contributor.
	HR Service Delivery	An extensive re-write to the Standard to incorporate: • The increased scope of different client segments • Recognition of different employment relationships • Need to be both proactive and reactive • The need to find new ways of servicing clients and where they are (remote, work any time) • HR service needs to be agile and available • Need to make sure HR 'rules' don't get in the way of real organisational effectiveness and using professional judgement rather than simply transactionally applying rigid rules.
	HR Technology	An extensive re-write to the Standard to emphasise appropriate use of technology for planning and decision-making; management of the risks and governance issues; ensuring accessibility and usability.
	HR Monitoring and Evaluation	Change of title to the Standard to bring in the widely accepted concept of Monitoring and Evaluation. Emphasis on using data to gain insights, positioning this firmly in the need to understand and report on the organisation's value creation in respect of human capital.

The SABPP has made the full Standard available on an e-platform: **https://sabbp.synrgiselearn.com/** Contact the SABPP Head Office to purchase and access the Standard.

Conclusion

As HR and people practitioners we need to ensure good people practices and outcomes as we navigate our evolving context and new world of work. The Standards embody the collective voices and insights of the HR community of South Africa to help achieve this. It serves to enable constructive and positive processes, results and outcomes for our people and organisations. It is important to recognise that the Standards are not meant to dictate a one size fits all approach. In fact, the Standards are outcomes based and do not specify a particular methodology, method, technique, or technology system. The HR practitioner needs to build the HR or people strategy and value proposition, employment value proposition, and related people management architecture and platforms for delivery and measurement that is aligned to their contexts and organisational strategy. The Standards serve as the 'scaffolding' to build these.
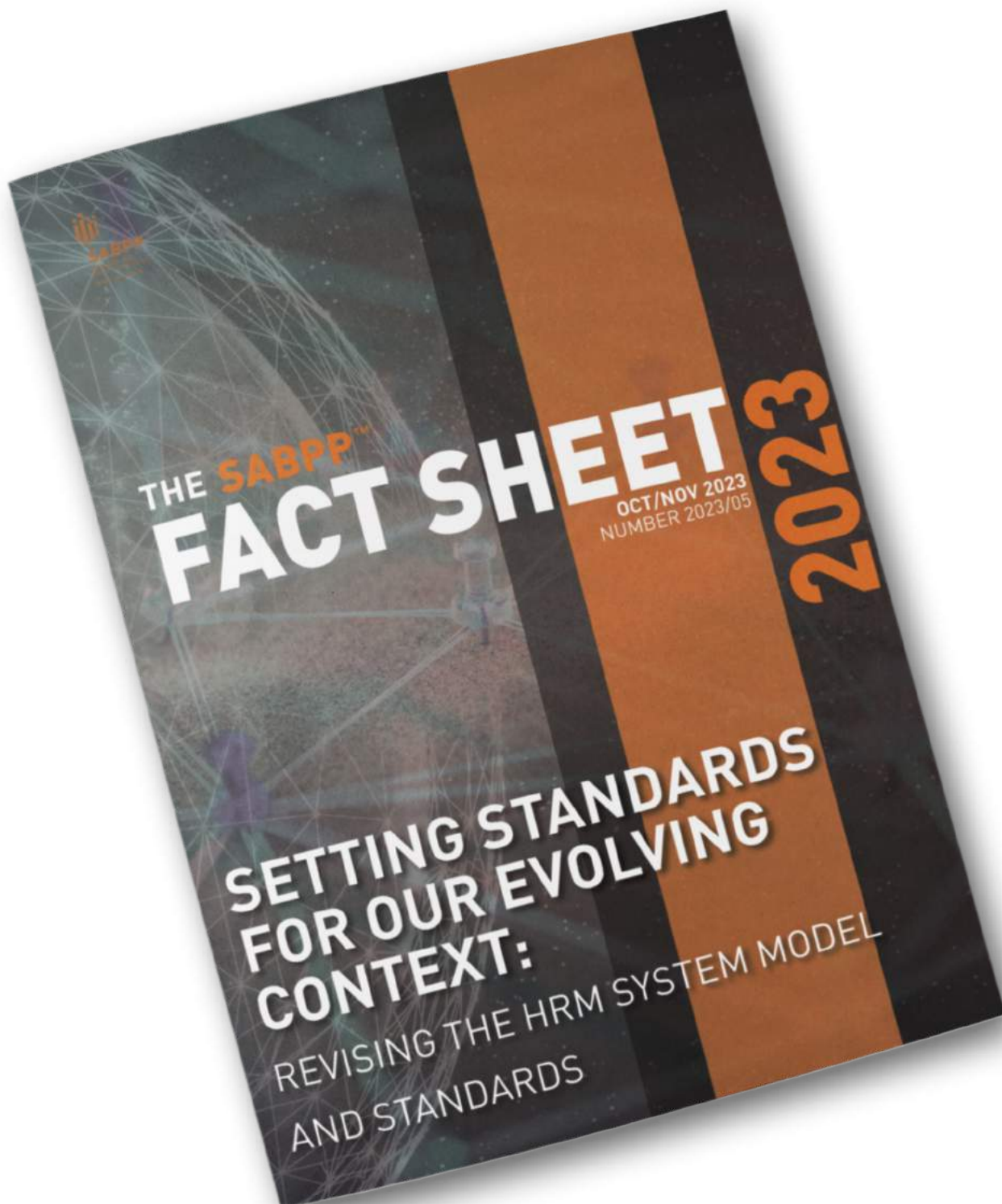
This Fact Sheet was written by the co-authors of the National People Practices and Governance Standard (PPGS):
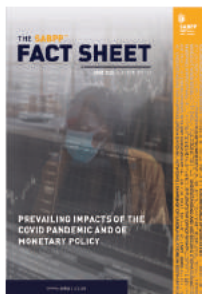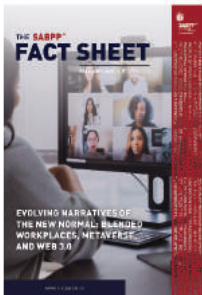
Dr Ajay Jivan

Dr Penny Abbott

Previous Editions of The Fact Sheet

SABPP ™

SA BOARD FOR
PEOPLE PRACTICES

Setting HR standards

2022

EVOLVING NARRATIVES OF THE NEW NORMAL: BLENDED WORKPLACES, METAVERSE AND WEB 3.0

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH TIME AND ITS MANAGEMENT IN THE NEW NORMAL

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH SPACE AND ITS MANAGEMENT IN THE NEW NORMAL

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TALENT MANAGEMENT POST PANDEMIC

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2023

EVOLVING ROLE OF THE CHRO

AI IN HR: EXAMPLE OF CHAT GPT

MEASURING LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

RETHINKING CAREERS

SETTING STANDARDS FOR OUR EVOLVING CONTEXT: REVISING THE HRM SYSTEM MODEL AND STANDARDS