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Capital Infrastructure Efficiency Grant (CIEG) for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges

by

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CIEG:	Capital Infrastructure and Efficiency Grant
CoS:	Centres of Specialisation
DHET:	Department of Higher Education and Training
IRM:	Infrastructure Reporting Model
MTEF:	Medium-Term Expenditure Framework
NSFAS:	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
PSET:	Post-School Education and Training
QCTO:	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
SHIP:	Student Housing Infrastructure Programme
TVET:	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Capital Infrastructure and Efficiency Grant (CIEG) was introduced in 2018/19 to address long-standing infrastructure deficits across South Africa's 50 Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges. The grant aims to improve teaching and learning environments, refurbish and maintain essential facilities, and expand student accommodation capacity. The analysis confirms that all TVET colleges receive the CIEG, providing a national baseline for infrastructure renewal.

Findings from college submissions and document analysis show that the CIEG has had a significant but uneven impact on the TVET sector. Colleges report improved workshops, laboratories, and classrooms, as well as compliance with safety and statutory requirements. Infrastructure governance has strengthened through the use of planning and reporting tools, such as the Infrastructure Reporting Model (IRM), resulting in improved transparency and project management. Where colleges retained project managers or maintained strong built-environment teams, implementation was generally smoother, resulting in higher completion rates and better utilisation of funds.

Despite these gains, the sector continues to face systemic challenges. Procurement delays, shortages of engineers and project managers, late disbursement of funds (often mid-year), and contractor underperformance contribute to extended timelines and underspending. Municipal approval delays and disruptions to community/business forums further impede delivery.

These issues have created variability in the pace of infrastructure progress across institutions. Student accommodation remains one of the most pressing constraints. Although some colleges have used CIEG funding to refurbish residences, only a minority currently possess functional student housing. Collectively, Colleges report a combined total of 9,517 beds, of which only 5,105 are occupied, with significant portions of the stock non-functional pending refurbishment. Addressing this shortfall is estimated to require approximately R3,76 billion in funding to bring college-owned residences to an adequate standard, highlighting the scale of the housing shortfall.

Overall, the CIEG has materially improved infrastructure conditions, modernised learning spaces, and contributed to the credibility and quality of occupational training. However, its full potential is constrained by capacity weaknesses, inconsistent implementation, and structural barriers impacting infrastructure delivery. Sustained improvements will require strengthened project management capacity, predictable and timely funding flows, targeted investment in student accommodation, and more responsive mechanisms for managing procurement, contractor performance, and local-level disruptions.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Infrastructure development is key to expanding access to quality education and training. Before 2018, the TVET sector was not allocated capital infrastructure efficiency grants to build new infrastructure or refurbish the existing teaching and learning facilities, including student accommodation. The sector experienced a significant infrastructure maintenance backlog, leading to workshops that failed to meet occupational health and safety requirements and to outdated, dilapidated college-owned student residences. This adversely impacted the quality of teaching and learning.

In 2018/19, the National Treasury significantly increased baseline funding for TVET colleges. The increase was driven by the introduction of TVET infrastructure baseline funding to refurbish campus buildings, purchase workshop equipment, and maintain facilities. The 2018/19 TVET CIEG allocation was R1,3 billion, with each TVET College receiving R26 million per annum for repairs and maintenance. The CIEG (Capital Infrastructure Efficiency Grant) for TVET colleges is a funding mechanism in South Africa specifically allocated for repairs and maintenance of teaching and learning infrastructure within the TVET sector. It aims to ensure that TVET colleges have functional, well-maintained facilities that support effective teaching and learning.

Since its introduction in 2018/19, the CIEG has allocated billions of rands toward:

- Maintenance and repairs;
- Refurbishment of workshops and laboratories;
- Renovation and expansion of student residences; and
- Establishment of asset management systems.

The CIEG is available to all 50 TVET colleges across South Africa. It is designed to cover the cost of repairs and maintenance of buildings, equipment, and other infrastructure within TVET colleges. The grant's primary focus is on improving the conditions of spaces where teaching and learning take place. Since its inception, however, the CIEG has faced a dramatic decline of approximately -85%, from R1.3 billion in 2018/19 to R195.8 million in 2025/26, providing each college with only R3,9 million for repairs and maintenance. These cuts are largely attributed to fiscal constraints and the sector's limited capacity to utilise the allocated funds fully.¹ The Department reported that the accumulated asset base for TVET Colleges is approximately R25 billion; the CIEG grant does not provide sufficient funding for the colleges to maintain their fixed assets effectively. In 2025/26, the R195,8 million could only be allocated to 36 TVET Colleges.

During its oversight visits to TVET Colleges, the Committee noted that Council members and Management Teams expressed serious concerns regarding the inadequacy of the CIEG and the uniform, one-size-fits-all allocation model. This approach fails to account for Colleges operating across multiple campuses and learning sites. To mitigate some of the pressing repair and maintenance challenges, TVET Colleges have sought additional funding from the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and the National Skills Fund (NSF). It is against this background that the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education intends to assess the impact of the introduction of the CEIG on the TVET sector, particularly on improving the quality of teaching and learning facilities, including student residences.

¹ Department of Higher Education and Training (2025).

Objectives of the study

- To assess the impact of the CEIG on the TVET sector;
- To establish whether all TVET colleges receive the CIEG;
- To determine the status of infrastructure projects in the sector; and
- To ascertain what the CIEG was used for.

2. CIEG FOR REFURBISHMENTS

The Capital Infrastructure and Efficiency Grant (CIEG) was introduced to strengthen the infrastructure capacity of South Africa's TVET colleges, particularly as student numbers continue to increase. The grant supports both new building projects and refurbishment initiatives aimed at reducing capital backlogs and modernising ageing facilities (DHET 2025).

CIEG is also explicitly tied to improving accessibility and inclusivity: policy guidelines require that approximately 10 per cent of the grant be allocated to ensuring disability compliance within college infrastructure (DHET 2025). This ensures refurbishments contribute not only to structural improvements but also to the creation of equitable and compliant learning environments. Upgrades commonly include modern ventilation, lighting, accessibility features, and digital infrastructure, elements essential for effective teaching and learning.

3. CIEG FOR STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

Student accommodation shortages remain one of the most pressing challenges in higher education, with inadequate housing directly impacting student safety, academic performance, and overall well-being. The Department of Higher Education and Training has emphasised the need for expanded, safe, and affordable student housing, supported through infrastructure and efficiency grants.²

CIEG forms part of this broader funding landscape, contributing to the refurbishment and expansion of residences. Recent investments include DHET-funded residence upgrades, such as the 200-bed accommodation facility unveiled at Tshwane University of Technology's eMalahleni campus, which was supported through Infrastructure and Efficiency Grants.³ Colleges such as Majuba and Gert Sibande received funding in the 2022/23 and 2024/25 financial years to construct new student residences.⁴

Furthermore, large-scale national programmes such as the Student Housing Infrastructure Programme (SHIP) aim to accelerate the rollout of 300,000 student beds across universities and TVET colleges over ten years.⁵ This programme seeks to address safety, affordability, and overcrowding concerns, with a particular focus on historically disadvantaged institutions.

² SAnews (2024).

³ Ibid.

⁴ National Treasury (2022; 2024)

⁵ DBSA (2026).

4. THE RATIONALE FOR INFRASTRUCTURE REFORM IN THE TVET SECTOR⁶

Historical Infrastructure Deficits

The merger of 152 technical colleges into 50 multi-campus TVET colleges created institutional consolidation without corresponding infrastructure harmonisation. Many campuses operated with:

- Ageing buildings;
- Inadequate workshop equipment;
- Poorly maintained plumbing and electrical systems;
- Limited ICT infrastructure; and
- Insufficient or non-existent student residences.

Infrastructure deficits directly affected educational quality by limiting practical training, compromising safety standards, and reducing student retention.

Infrastructure and Teaching Quality

In vocational education, infrastructure is not merely supportive—it is pedagogically central. Workshops, simulation laboratories, and trade test centres are integral to curriculum delivery. Poor infrastructure, therefore, undermines:

- Artisan training quality;
- Occupational competence development;
- Industry confidence in graduates; and
- Accreditation compliance.

The CIEG was thus conceptualised not as cosmetic refurbishment funding, but as a quality-enhancing intervention.

5. IMPACT ON TEACHING AND LEARNING FACILITIES⁷

Renovation and Modernisation of Workshops

CIEG funding has enabled:

- Upgrading of trade workshops;
- Replacement of obsolete training equipment;
- Electrical and plumbing system repairs; and
- Roofing, glazing, and structural refurbishments.

These improvements have enhanced compliance with occupational standards and supported Centres of Specialisation programmes.

Upgraded facilities contribute to:

- Improved practical training hours;
- Safer learning environments;

⁶ Department of Higher Education and Training (2019).

⁷ Department of Higher Education and Training (2019; 2025).

- Increased institutional credibility; and
- Expanded capacity in priority trades.

However, the extent of improvement varies across institutions due to differences in project implementation capacity.

Improvement of Classrooms and Laboratories

The grant has supported:

- Refurbishment of lecture halls;
- Installation of ICT infrastructure;
- Expansion of laboratory space; and
- Modernisation of engineering training environments.

These improvements are particularly important in light of curriculum transformation efforts that incorporate digital competencies and 4IR-aligned training modules.

Enhanced classroom environments improve:

- Student engagement;
- Pedagogical effectiveness; and
- Hybrid and blended learning delivery.

Yet challenges remain, with ICT activation lagging behind physical installation.

6. STUDENT RESIDENCES: EXPANDING ACCESS AND RETENTION⁸

One of the most significant quality-related impacts of the CIEG has been in student accommodation.

The Importance of Residences

Many TVET students originate from rural or low-income households. Without adequate accommodation:

- Students travel long distances;
- Dropout rates increase;
- Attendance declines; and
- Academic performance suffers.

Infrastructure funding has supported:

- Renovation of existing residences;
- New roofing and plumbing systems;
- Expansion of bed capacity; and
- Improved sanitation and safety.

Improved residences contribute directly to:

- Student retention;
- Academic stability;

⁸ DBSA (2026).

- Reduced financial burden; and
- Enhanced student well-being.

Linking Accommodation to Educational Outcomes

International evidence demonstrates that student accommodation quality correlates with throughput and completion rates. In the South African TVET context, residence upgrades are particularly critical in rural provinces where transport infrastructure is limited. The CIEG has therefore strengthened not only physical infrastructure but also social infrastructure supporting student success.

7. INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS AND IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES⁹

Despite measurable gains, the impact of the CIEG has been uneven.

Underspending and Procurement Delays

Parliamentary briefings revealed that infrastructure expenditure in certain years fell significantly below planned targets due to:

- Shortage of built-environment professionals;
- Weak project management capacity;
- Delays in procurement processes; and
- Compliance bottlenecks.

Underspending undermines the intended acceleration effect of the grant.

Asset Management Weaknesses

Prior to CIEG, many colleges lacked:

- Maintenance plans;
- Lifecycle asset registers;
- Condition assessments; and
- Preventive maintenance strategies.

While the new national asset management system is promising, full institutionalisation remains incomplete. Inherited buildings bring special challenges including extremely high refurbishment costs; structural non-compliance; complex approvals for repurposing and increased engineering and PM requirements. Some TVET colleges, such as Eastcape Midlands, inherited buildings from the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) that were never designed for education and training purposes. These facilities are not fit-for-purpose and require significant repurposing and refurbishment to meet TVET operational, safety, and compliance requirements. Addressing this legacy infrastructure will require dedicated funding beyond routine maintenance allocations.

⁹ Department of Higher Education and Training (2019; 2025).

Variability Across Colleges

Colleges with stronger governance and experienced infrastructure units demonstrate higher absorption rates and better project completion outcomes. Others struggle with:

- Leadership instability;
- Contractor management challenges; and
- Internal control weaknesses

This variability limits sector-wide impact.

8. BROADER EDUCATIONAL AND SYSTEMIC IMPACTS

The CIEG has contributed to:

- Improved institutional credibility;
- Enhanced safety compliance;
- Strengthened industry partnerships; and
- Increased enrolment capacity.

Infrastructure upgrades support broader policy objectives, including:

- Expansion of artisan training;
- Implementation of Centres of Specialisation;
- Digital skills integration; and
- Increased access in underserved areas.

However, infrastructure alone does not guarantee quality. Complementary investments in lecturer development, curriculum reform, and student support are essential.

9. POLICY IMPLICATIONS¹⁰

To maximise the impact of the CIEG, several reforms are necessary:

Strengthened Project Management Capacity

- Dedicated infrastructure units in colleges;
- Built-environment professional recruitment; and
- Training in procurement compliance.

Performance-Linked Infrastructure Funding

- Incentivising timely expenditure;
- Linking allocations to maintenance compliance; and
- Transparent reporting mechanisms.

Integrated Planning

Infrastructure investment must align with:

- Regional economic strategies;
- Programme expansion priorities; and
- Industry demand forecasts.

¹⁰ Department of Higher Education and Training (2019, 2025); DBSA (2026).

Student Residence Strategy

A dedicated national student accommodation strategy for TVET colleges is required to:

- Standardise norms and design;
- Ensure maintenance sustainability; and
- Leverage blended finance mechanisms.

10. CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSSES

While the CIEG has driven notable progress, its implementation has been uneven and constrained by several systemic challenges. Many colleges initially lacked key professionals in the built environment, such as project managers, engineers, and quantity surveyors. Procurement processes remain slow, often taking 3–6 months, and delays in the release of funds—sometimes mid-year—have hindered timely project implementation. Colleges frequently reported contractor underperformance, municipal approval delays, price escalations, and serious disruptions from community/business forums (commonly referred to as the “construction mafia”), leading to site shutdowns. Additionally, the withdrawal of grant-funded project manager posts created gaps in institutional capacity.

Despite these difficulties, colleges have highlighted several successes: improved reporting systems through DHET’s IRM training, increased transparency, enhanced completion rates where internal project managers were retained, and faster procurement following the delegation of approvals to college councils. These improvements have strengthened infrastructure governance and enabled a more effective use of grant funding.

Infrastructure quality is widely recognised as a critical determinant of effective teaching and learning in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems, particularly because vocational pedagogy depends on specialised workshops, laboratories, and equipment-intensive environments. In the South African context, the Parliamentary Research Unit (PRU) highlights that historical under-investment and spatial inequality left many colleges with deteriorated facilities, obsolete equipment, and inadequate student residences by the mid-2010s, prompting a need for systematic infrastructure renewal.

11. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Capital Infrastructure and Efficiency Grant (CIEG), introduced in 2018/19, was designed to address these deficits through dedicated funding for maintenance backlogs, refurbishment of teaching spaces, expansion of residence capacity, and the strengthening of infrastructure governance. The PRU analysis notes that the grant has supported substantial investment—amounting to several billion rand nationally—in maintenance, compliance upgrades, and the construction of new campuses, while also formalising planning and reporting practices through the Infrastructure Reporting Model (IRM).

These policy directions align with DHET’s contemporaneous PSET funding framework, which explicitly recorded a R7.99 billion Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) baseline for TVET CIEG from 2018/19 to 2023/24, the requirement that colleges open separate interest-bearing accounts, and an initial equal-allocation approach (2018/19) shifting to an 80/20 model (2019/20) based on enrolments and costed maintenance plans—together with conditions on project management posts, quarterly reporting, and priority categories such as

bulk services, statutory compliance, sanitation, and student-residence repairs.¹¹

A recurring theme across sector literature is that infrastructure spending translates into improved outcomes only when institutional implementation capacity is sufficiently strong. In its analysis, the PRU observes that early phases of the CIEG were constrained by shortages of built-environment professionals, lengthy supply-chain processes, and centralised approval mechanisms, which contributed to delays and underspending.

DHET's 2019 oversight slides corroborate these dynamics, noting 12 per cent performance against a 50 per cent APP target in Q2 2019/20, and attributing lower expenditure to capacity constraints (single infrastructure project-manager posts), limited technical skills, and long tender lead times—while outlining the approval and monitoring regimen (work-package approvals, cost-item control, IRM reporting, and targeted technical support) to improve value for money.¹² Subsequent delegation of approvals to college councils and continued IRM use are identified by the PRU as design corrections that improved absorption and transparency, though capacity gaps persist where CIEG-funded project-manager posts were discontinued.

Student accommodation features prominently in both the literature and the empirical dataset. Research suggests that access to safe, affordable, and institutionally managed accommodation significantly influences student retention, attendance, and performance—particularly in rural and low-income contexts. The PRU dataset confirms that only a minority of colleges currently possess functional residences, with many reporting non-functional bed stock and extensive refurbishment needs. Colleges estimate substantial funding gaps to achieve adequate coverage, and several note that poor conditions or competition from NSFAS-funded private accommodation suppresses occupancy rates.

At system level, DHET's Student Housing Infrastructure Programme (SHIP) aims to add 300,000 beds over ten years (200,000 university; 100,000 TVET) at an estimated cost >R60 billion, explicitly acknowledging that existing grant streams are insufficient and that blended finance and DFIs are required—further evidencing the structural nature of the housing shortfall.¹³

The delivery environment itself is a recurrent concern. Colleges describe contractor underperformance, price escalations, municipal approval delays, and community/business forum interference (“construction mafia”) that trigger site stoppages and extend timelines, compounding the effects of late-year disbursements and long procurement lead times. These challenges, evident in the PRU dataset, mirror DHET's earlier oversight findings on procurement and contract management weaknesses, and the need for more consistent client delivery management and municipal service coordination.¹⁴

Finally, although infrastructure investment remains foundational, the broader literature emphasises that its benefits are maximised only when combined with lecturer development, curriculum reform, and stronger industry partnerships. The PRU analysis similarly frames the CIEG as part of a wider system-strengthening agenda: modernised infrastructure provides the enabling environment for the delivery of QCTO-aligned programmes and improved

¹¹ Department of Higher Education and Training (2019).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Department of Higher Education and Training (2019).

¹⁴ Ibid.

compliance, thereby shaping the long-term credibility and responsiveness of the TVET sector (Parliamentary Research Unit 2026a). The present study is also rooted in a formal oversight process: the 22 July 2025 Parliamentary communication to DHET set objectives, timelines, and coordination mechanisms for the research, anchoring the evidence base used here.

12. METHODOLOGY

This study explored the impact of the CEIG on the TVET sector, particularly on improving the quality of teaching and learning facilities, including student residences. Structured and open-ended responses from 50 TVET colleges were collected via a standardised questionnaire. These responses were analysed and synthesised using Excel.

Quantitative fields (e.g., allocations by year, bed counts) were cleaned and normalised to estimate cross-sectional totals and trends, whilst qualitative responses were thematically coded to surface cross-cutting constraints and recommendations.

13. DATA ANALYSIS

- **Dataset and scope:** Responses from 50 TVET colleges covering 56 variables (allocations by year, capacity/readiness, SCM/process issues, DHET support, project management, and student accommodation: beds, occupancy, refurbishment needs, budgets). Includes both quantitative and qualitative fields.
- **Method highlights:** Currency fields were normalised (symbols removed; first numeric token parsed); annual totals and accommodation counts were aggregated across colleges with numeric entries. Occupancy was computed as occupied beds / total beds among records with both values present.

14. PRESENTATION OF DATA

Trends in Aggregate CIEG Allocations

The figure below illustrates the aggregate annual CIEG allocations reported by TVET colleges. The pattern shows substantial variability across years, suggesting that infrastructure funding has not followed a stable incremental trajectory. This fluctuation is significant because inconsistent multi-year funding inhibits long-term capital planning, a weakness widely documented in TVET sector reviews. The earlier years (e.g., Prior 2018, 2019/20) exhibit relatively higher aggregated amounts, while later years show mixed behaviour, reflecting both the changing scope of the grant and mid-cycle adjustments communicated to colleges.

From a policy perspective, this inconsistency aligns with findings reported in college narratives indicating delays in allocation letters, withheld tranches due to low spending, and shifting priorities in DHET's budget environment. The absence of predictable annual increases underscores a structural limitation affecting project sequencing and procurement readiness.



Figure 1: Total CIEG allocations by year

Analysis of total CIEG allocations across the reporting period reveals substantial year-to-year variability, with no consistent upward trajectory in overall funding. Earlier periods—including Prior 2018 and 2019/20—show higher aggregated totals compared to later years, which display mixed behaviour and fluctuating totals. This pattern mirrors discontinuities described by colleges in the dataset, including delayed allocation letters, withheld tranches due to low spending, and shifting DHET budget priorities. Such volatility impedes the TVET sector’s ability to engage in multiyear capital planning, which depends on predictable ceilings for procurement and project scheduling.

When a linear trend line is applied to these annual totals, the model indicates a flat or slightly negative long-term trajectory, signifying that CIEG allocations have not kept pace with rising infrastructure needs. The trend line’s modest R^2 value shows that while individual years fluctuate, the underlying direction remains weak or downward. This aligns with qualitative submissions describing declining allocations compared to inception years, the withdrawal of CIEG-funded project manager posts, and growing pressure to deliver upgrades within tightening financial constraints. Collectively, the evidence indicates structural fragility in the capital investment pipeline and a widening gap between current funding levels and the ageing infrastructure of TVET colleges.

Total CIEG Allocations with Trend Line

When a linear trend is fitted to the same-year-on-year totals, the slope shows a slight flattening or decline across the period, indicating that—within the dataset—CIEG allocations are not increasing over time. The R^2 value (reported in the chart) indicates a moderate fit, suggesting that while annual totals fluctuate, the underlying long-term trend remains weak or downward.

This trend is consistent with colleges’ qualitative comments describing:

- Declining allocations compared to inception;
- Funds withheld for low expenditure; and
- The discontinuation of certain grant-funded posts,

all of which point to fiscal constraints and a reduction in the intensity of infrastructure funding across the sector.

Such a trend has implications for asset renewal cycles, which, in the TVET system, are already under strain due to ageing buildings and compliance backlogs.

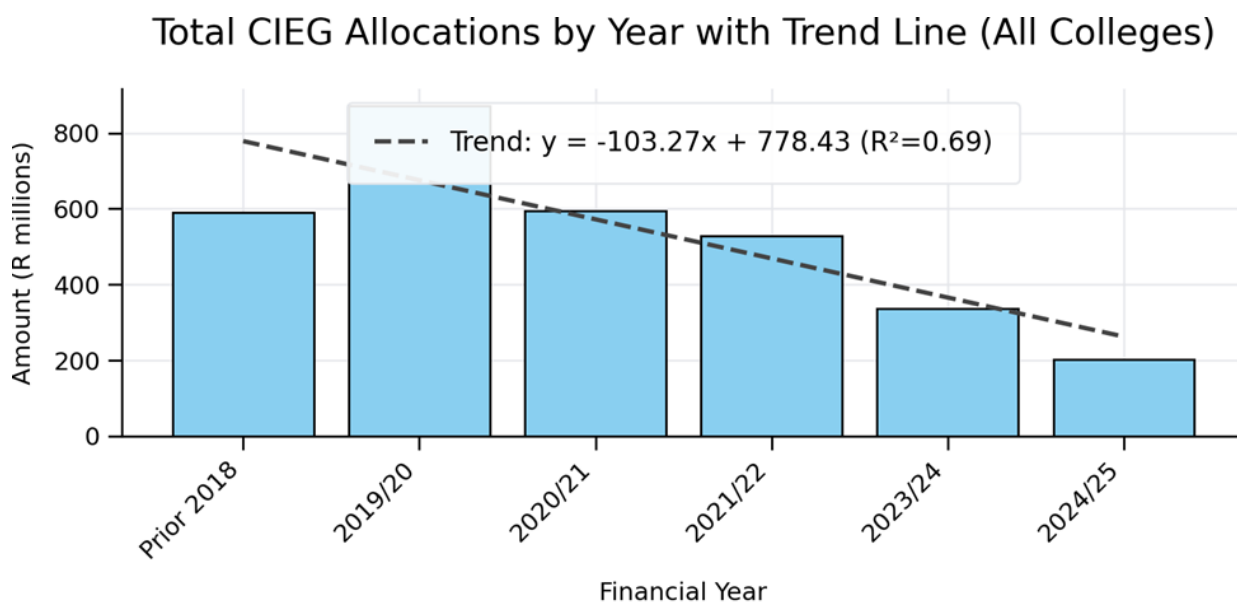


Figure 2: Total allocations with trend line

The trend line analysis reinforces the finding that, despite fluctuations, overall allocations exhibit a weak or declining long-term trend. Colleges' qualitative explanations corroborate this pattern, describing funds withheld due to low expenditure, the discontinuation of grant-funded posts, and ongoing fiscal pressure that has constrained infrastructure renewal.

The downward tendency is significant because it affects asset renewal cycles in a system already burdened by compliance backlogs and deteriorating buildings. A weakening investment trajectory means that long-term infrastructure needs are likely to outpace available resources, deepening the backlog and slowing campus modernisation initiatives across the sector.

Top 15 Colleges by Total Recorded Allocations

This ranking highlights substantial disparities between institutions, with a small subset of colleges receiving significantly higher cumulative allocations. The concentration of funding among the top 15 institutions could reflect:

- The scale of their campuses;
- Historic infrastructure backlogs;
- Successful application capability; or
- Allocation formulas tied to readiness and spending performance.

The large inter-college differences re-emphasise structural inequality: colleges with initially stronger infrastructure units appear better positioned to secure and manage larger allocations.

At the same time, smaller or rural institutions often report capacity constraints and staffing gaps, which may limit the funding they receive.

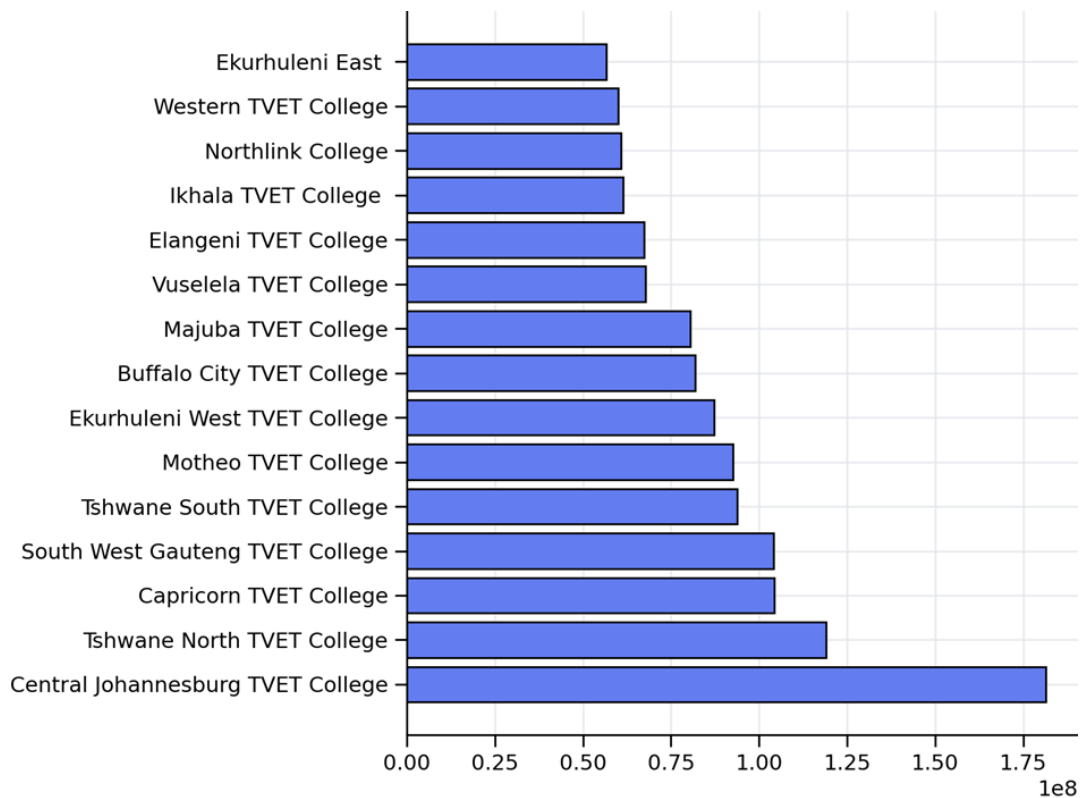


Figure 3: Top 15 colleges by total recorded allocations

The ranking of the Top 15 colleges by total recorded allocations reveals marked concentration effects, with a subset of colleges receiving disproportionately high funding relative to the rest of the sector. These disparities reflect differences in institutional scale, historical infrastructure backlogs, application readiness, and staffing capacity. Colleges with well-established infrastructure units—those with large enrolments or multi-campus networks—are better positioned to secure and manage larger allocations.

Conversely, smaller or rural institutions report difficulty preparing compliant submissions, obtaining approvals, and sustaining technical posts, limiting their ability to absorb or execute major capital grants. These uneven conditions reinforce structural inequalities and result in divergent institutional development trajectories across the TVET landscape.

Allocations by Year — Top 15 Colleges

The stacked view reveals heterogeneous allocation timing across the top-funded colleges. Some institutions show heavy front-loading (e.g., substantial allocations in early years), while others exhibit more distributed patterns. This demonstrates that colleges do not experience the CIEG uniformly across time, likely due to factors including:

- Approval delays;
- Project readiness;
- Resubmitted maintenance plans; and
- Revisions to DHET’s funding priorities.

The diversity in these temporal footprints challenges the assumption that TVET capital funding is synchronised nationally—instead, the data point to a highly variable funding lifecycle for large colleges.

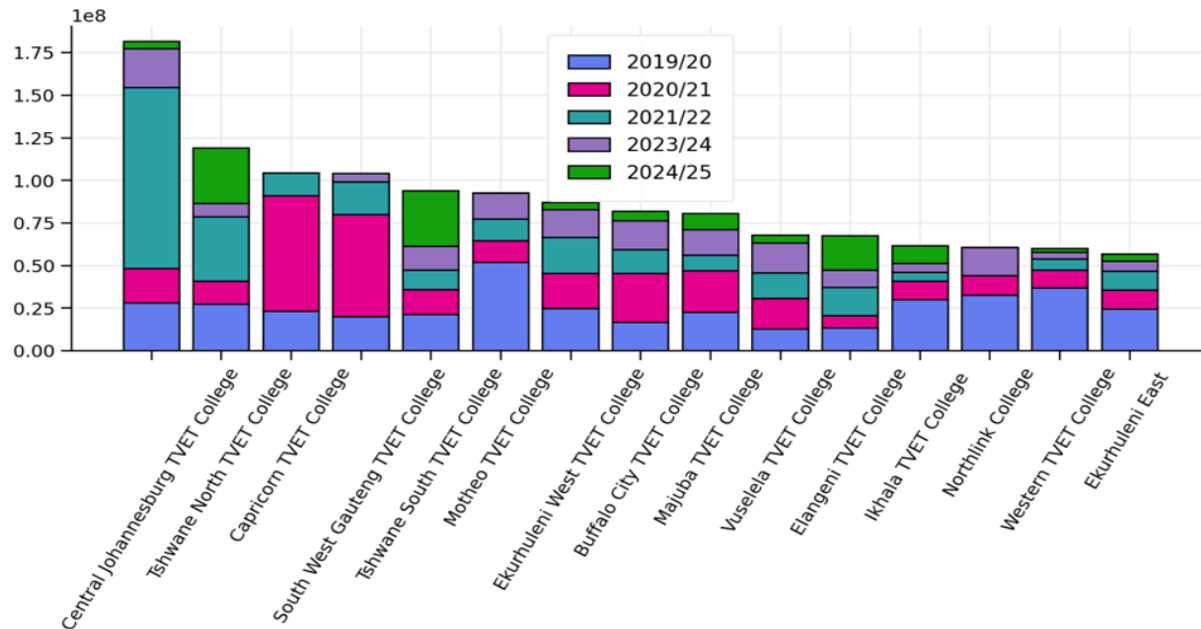


Figure 4: Allocations by year — Top 15 colleges

The distribution of reported bed capacity across colleges reveals a severely skewed landscape: the majority of institutions offer minimal or no on-campus accommodation. At the same time, a small number maintain high capacities. This imbalance reflects the historical legacy of the TVET system, in which only certain colleges retained residences during earlier restructuring processes. From an equity standpoint, the distribution suggests that access to institutional housing is highly uneven, with students in a limited geographic region benefiting.

The comparison of beds versus occupied beds among the 15 largest residence providers shows that even colleges with substantial capacity often operate with significant numbers of unoccupied or non-functional beds. Qualitative responses attribute this to maintenance backlogs, ongoing refurbishment projects, deteriorated buildings, or student preferences for less restrictive or more modern private accommodation. These patterns reveal that the challenge is not simply the quantum of beds, but rather the functional integrity and habitability of existing stock. This aligns with the broader observation that deferred maintenance—driven by funding volatility and staffing shortages—has reduced the usability of residence blocks even where nominal capacity appears adequate.

Student Accommodation — CIEG Received (Yes/No)

The binary distribution shows that only a minority of colleges received CIEG allocations specifically for student accommodation. This is academically significant because student housing shortages are among the most frequently cited access barriers in the TVET sector.

The finding reinforces a key policy observation: despite national directives highlighting

accommodation shortages—especially for rural and peri-urban students—the CIEG has been unevenly applied to student housing needs. Several colleges reported land disputes, insufficient funding, or inability to obtain approval for new residences, further constraining expansion.

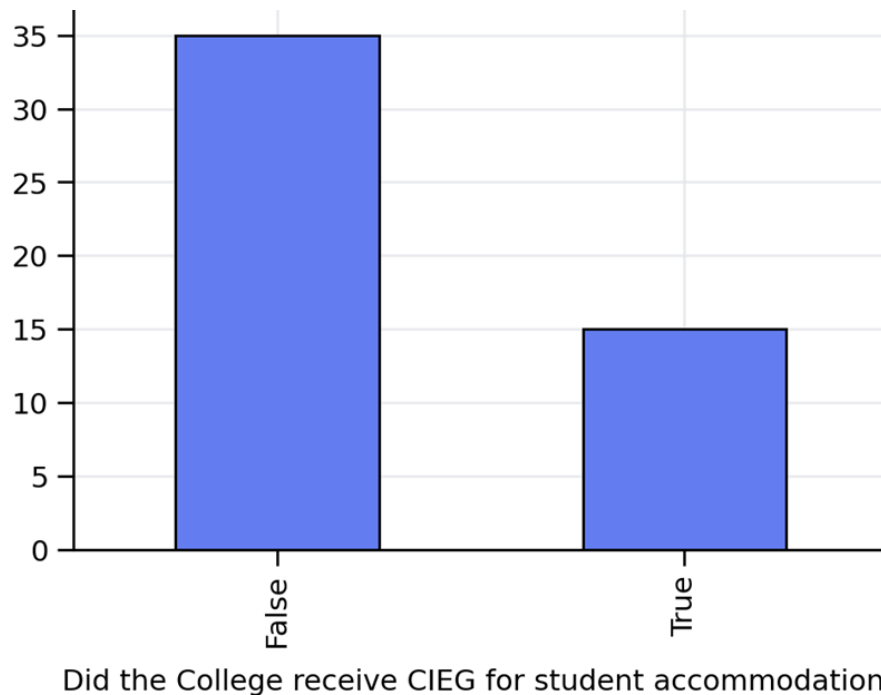


Figure 5: Student accommodation — CIEG received (Yes/No)

The binary student accommodation chart shows that only a minority of colleges received CIEG allocations for student housing, despite widespread reporting of accommodation shortages.

This limited reach is significant: many TVET students—particularly those in rural or peri-urban areas—face long-distance travel barriers that undermine attendance and success. Colleges reported several reasons for the low incidence of accommodation funding, including land ownership disputes, insufficient funding envelopes, and cases where approved allocations could not be fully utilised due to contractor non-performance or delayed municipal authorisations. As a result, the CIEG has not functioned as a dependable mechanism for expanding residential stock, and colleges increasingly rely on NSFAS-accredited private accommodation, shifting quality assurance and cost oversight outside institutional control.

Distribution of Reported Bed Capacity

The histogram shows a highly skewed distribution: most colleges report very few beds, while a few institutions have relatively large student housing capacities. This imbalance reflects the historically uneven development of TVET residential infrastructure, in which only a handful of colleges inherited legacy residences from pre-merger institutions.

This pattern has two critical implications:

- TVET access remains commuter-dependent, with only a few colleges capable of offering residential support.
- Colleges with limited or zero beds are structurally disadvantaged when serving rural catchments, where students cannot reasonably travel daily.

The distribution also illustrates why NSFAS private accommodation markets have emerged informally around some campuses.

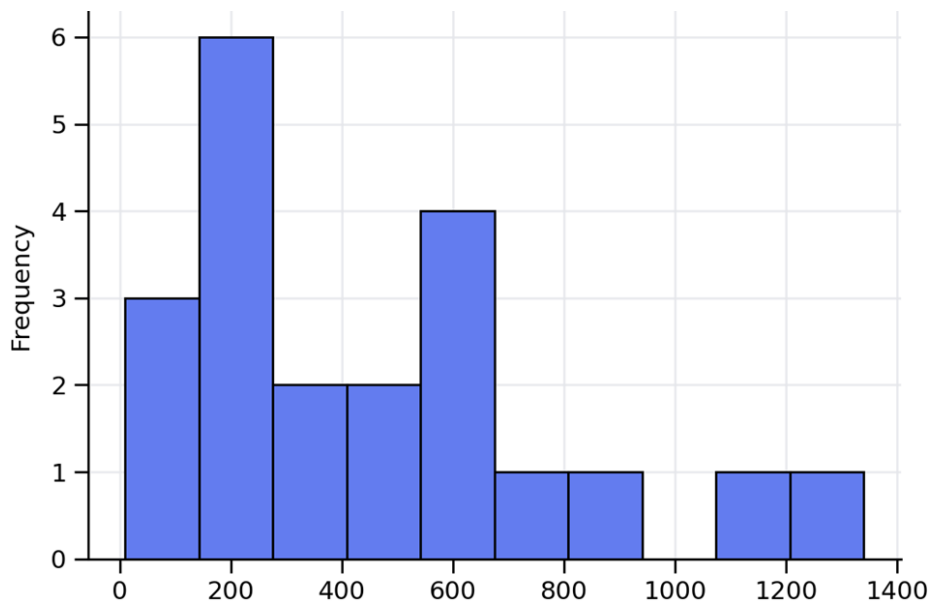


Figure 6: Distribution of reported beds (college residences)

The distribution of student bed capacity across colleges is severely skewed, with most institutions reporting very low or zero residence capacity, while only a small number hold sizeable bed stocks.

This pattern reflects the historical legacy of the TVET sector, in which only certain institutions retained residences during earlier restructuring processes. The result is a landscape in which access to on-campus housing is geographically uneven, disproportionately benefiting a limited set of colleges. The lack of institutional beds forces the majority of students into commuter arrangements or fragmented private accommodation markets—conditions widely identified as barriers to access, retention, and student wellbeing.

Beds vs Occupied — Top 15 by Capacity

The side-by-side comparison of capacity and occupancy shows that even among the largest residential providers, a significant proportion of beds remain unoccupied. Qualitative explanations in the dataset include:

- Non-functional or partially renovated blocks;
- Incomplete refurbishments;
- Student preferences for private accommodation (often NSFAS-accredited); and

- Safety, maintenance, or utility failures.

Thus, the supply-side challenge is not only about insufficient bed numbers but also about functional availability and quality. This is consistent with the broader infrastructure literature, which shows that deferred maintenance, vandalism, and compliance failures reduce the usable portion of public-sector residential stock.

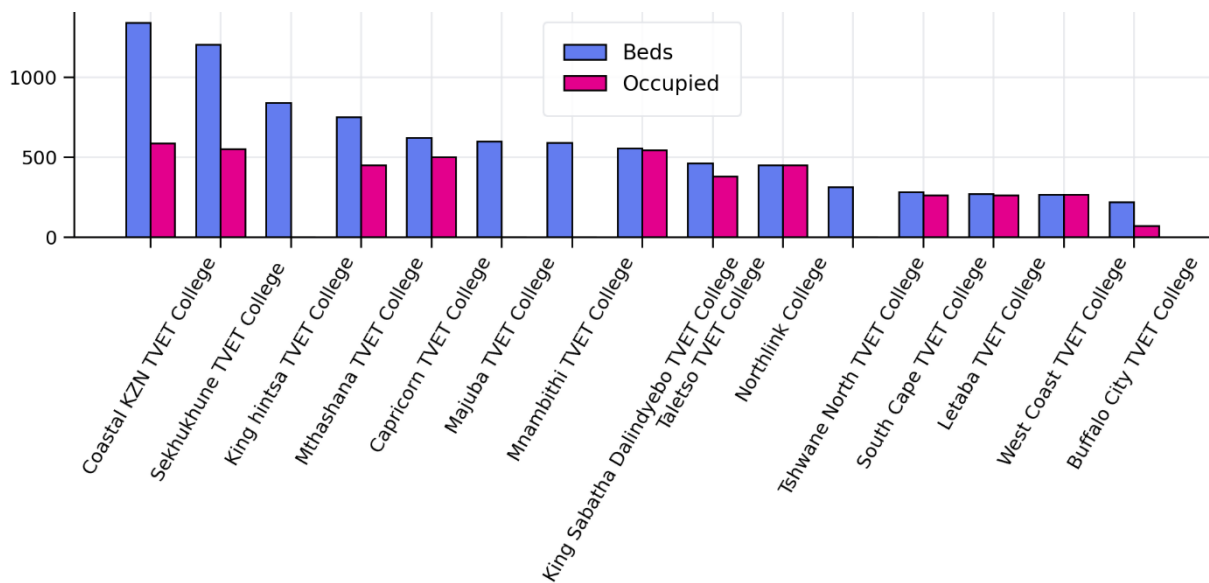


Figure 7: Beds vs occupied — Top 15 by capacity

Analysis of the Top 15 colleges by residence capacity reveals that even where institutions maintain large nominal capacity, substantial numbers of beds remain unoccupied.

Qualitative explanations attribute this underutilisation to non-functional or partially renovated blocks, incomplete refurbishments, safety or utility failures, and student preferences for NSFAS-accredited private accommodation. These findings indicate that the core challenge is not only limited capacity but also the functional availability and habitability of existing stock.

This aligns with broader public-sector infrastructure trends in which deferred maintenance, vandalism, and compliance failures reduce usable stock even where nominal capacity appears adequate.

15. OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

Allocations and utilisation (overall patterns)

- Most colleges show an initial allocation from 2018/19, followed by volatility—with a noticeable tailing-off or zeros in 2024/25 for many respondents.
- Colleges that retained/appointed project managers or strengthened infrastructure/SCM units generally reported smoother implementation and higher

- spend.
- Common timing issue: funds often arrive mid-year (July–August), compressing tendering and delivery windows.

Capacity and process

Early implementation was hampered by limited capacity in the built environment (PMs, Qs, engineers) and long tender cycles (often months). Over time, delegation to college councils, IRM/reporting training, and the use of principal-agent structures improved delivery. However, the withdrawal of grant-funded PM posts recreated capacity gaps in several colleges.

Implementation risks

Recurrent obstacles included contractor underperformance, municipal plan approvals, price escalations, and disruptions to community/business forums (“construction mafia”), leading to stoppages. These appear across multiple narrative responses.

Student accommodation

Only a minority of colleges have functional residences; many depend on private landlords. 15 colleges reported receiving CIEG specifically for accommodation.

Reported totals across respondents: 9,517 beds, 5,105 occupied (54 per cent occupancy among those reporting both values), and 2,775 non-functional pending refurbishments—pointing to latent capacity constrained by condition and affordability/quality relative to private options. The estimated funding needed to make college-owned accommodation adequate is R3.76 billion (sum of colleges’ own estimates).

System-level effects

Where projects progressed, colleges report modernised workshops/labs, stronger compliance (OHS, fire, electrical), and improved credibility for QCTO/CoS-aligned training—but gains are uneven across institutions.

15.1 Most consistent challenges identified

Table 1: Challenges identified

Category	Description
Funding Delays	Many allocations received in July–August , delaying tenders and implementation.
SCM bottlenecks	Lengthy tender processes (3–6 months).
Contractor underperformance	Contractors with poor financial health, a lack of capacity, and delays.
Construction mafia/business forums	Reported by many colleges across provinces, causing site shutdowns and intimidation.
Municipal approvals	Delays in plan approvals, especially for new buildings.
Inflation & price escalations	Reduced scope due to budget constraints.
Lack of internal capacity	Especially technical capacity (QS, engineers).
DHET approval delays	Early years, especially.

Table 1 shows that colleges consistently face delays and disruptions across the infrastructure delivery chain, driven by late funding releases, long SCM processes, and underperforming contractors. External factors such as construction-mafia interference and slow municipal approvals further stall projects, while rising costs reduce project scope. These challenges are compounded by limited internal technical capacity and early-year delays in DHET approvals, creating systemic obstacles to timely implementation.

16. DISCUSSION

The results provide a detailed picture of the structural, financial, and institutional dynamics shaping the implementation of the Capital Infrastructure and Efficiency Grant (CIEG) across South African TVET colleges. The year-to-year variability in total allocations underscores a persistent lack of funding stability, undermining long-term planning and project execution. Colleges repeatedly reported that delayed allocation letters, unpredictable tranches, and mid-year adjustments impeded project sequencing and procurement readiness, a pattern reflected in the fluctuating annual totals shown in the total allocations chart.

The slightly downward trend in total allocations over the analysed period further suggests that the CIEG has not grown in proportion to the infrastructure burden facing colleges, many of which must upgrade or replace ageing buildings, outdated workshops, and non-compliant facilities. This trend corroborates qualitative evidence in the survey dataset, where multiple colleges reported discontinuing grant-funded technical posts, increased reliance on internal funds to hire project managers, and insufficient resources to address compliance backlogs.

Significant inequities in college-level allocations are also evident. The Top 15 institutions received disproportionately higher amounts than the rest of the system, reflecting not only differences in size but also disparities in administrative capacity, readiness to implement projects, and ability to resolve land or municipal approval issues. The finding that stronger colleges are consistently better able to absorb and utilise funds implies a structural bias in the system—colleges with existing infrastructure management capacity become more capable of securing further infrastructure investments. At the same time, those starting from weak baselines struggle to break the cycle.

The stacked allocation profiles also reveal non-synchronised funding trajectories, with disbursement timing varying widely across institutions. This is notable for a national grant designed to promote consistent infrastructure improvements. Colleges' narrative responses point to delays caused by community interference, municipal plan approvals, SCM turnaround times, and construction-industry bottlenecks—factors external to the colleges but critical to execution. These systemic frictions contribute to the slow pace and uneven geography of TVET infrastructure renewal.

Student accommodation is among the most pressing yet underfunded components of the CIEG. The Yes/No allocation chart shows that only a small minority of colleges accessed CIEG funding for residences, despite widespread recognition that housing shortages severely constrain student success, attendance, and safety. While the CIEG was not initially designed as a housing grant, the policy directive to prioritise rural students is contradicted by the limited uptake of residence-related funding. Furthermore, even colleges with large existing capacities show substantial under-occupancy due to non-functional buildings, refurbishment delays, or student choice patterns favouring NSFAS-accredited private accommodation.

The highly skewed bed-capacity distribution provides important empirical support for long-standing concerns about inequitable infrastructure legacies in the TVET sector. With most colleges possessing either zero or minimal bed capacity—and only a small cluster maintaining sizable residences—the current distribution entrenches regional inequalities in access to accommodation. The underoccupancy patterns within the largest providers further show that infrastructure deficits are not limited to the quantity of beds, but extend to the quality, safety, and usability of existing facilities.

Overall, the results reveal a system characterised by funding volatility, capacity disparities, inconsistent implementation environments, uneven access to student accommodation, and infrastructure fragility—conditions that collectively constrain the ability of the TVET sector to expand access, modernise facilities, and deliver programmes aligned to labour-market needs.

17. RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

For DHET

- Predictability & Timing:** Communicate 3 year ceilings early, release funds by 1 A.
- Capacity:** Reinstate grant funded Project Managers.
- Quality & Value:** Standardize fee caps, screen contractors, track poor performers.
- Student Accommodation:** Fund refurbishments & rural campuses.
- Approvals & Disruptions:** Rapid response for approvals issues.
- Practice Support:** IRM plus clinics on CIDB, JBCC, Variations.
- Practice Support:** IRM plus clinics on CIDB, JBCC, Variations.

For Parliament / Oversight

- Support Multi-Year, Ring-Fenced Funding.**
- Strengthen Land & IG Coordination.**
- Transparent Reporting on Contractor Performance.**
- Targeted Funding for Rural Colleges.**
- Targeted Funding for Rural Colleges.**

17.1 Further recommendations

Further Recommendations

Strengthen Funding Predictability & Multi-Year Planning

- Introduce firm three-year indicative ceilings before each financial cycle.
- Release first tranches by 1 April annually.



Address Capacity Deficits

- Reinstate project manager posts or create regional PMO units.
- Standardize pay for infrastructure roles.



Improve Infrastructure Governance & Safeguards

- Screen contractors and enforce fee caps.
- Create a rapid escalation channel.



Expand & Modernise Student Accommodation

- Develop ring-fenced funding for residences.
- Prioritize rural & dispersed colleges.
- Refurbish non-functional dorms.



Strengthen Equity & Oversight Mechanisms

- Adopt multi-year appropriations for housing.
- Ensure transparent reporting.
- Address land ownership barriers.



Enhance Practice Oriented Support to Colleges

- Expand training on procurement & contract management.
- Provide national maintenance guidelines.



18. CONCLUSION

The analysis of CIEG allocation patterns and college-level responses demonstrates that while the grant has supported important upgrades across the sector, its implementation remains uneven, unpredictable, and insufficiently aligned with systemic needs. The variability in annual allocations and the downward long-term trend indicate that funding intensity has not kept pace with the growing infrastructure demands of a sector undergoing curriculum transformation and expanding enrolments. The concentration of funding among colleges with existing administrative capacity suggests that the grant inadvertently reproduces institutional inequality rather than alleviating it.

Student accommodation remains a significant structural weakness. Despite strategic policy recognition of its importance—particularly for rural and peri-urban students—the distribution of funding reveals a mismatch between need and investment. Bed capacity data show not only a scarcity of supply but also widespread non-functionality within existing stock, signalling deferred maintenance and under-resourced infrastructure management systems.

The findings point to the necessity of a more predictable, capacity-sensitive, and equity-driven infrastructure grant framework. Without reforms, the TVET sector will continue to face serious constraints in its ability to deliver high-quality learning environments, reduce spatial inequalities, and address systemic student-accommodation deficits.

The Capital Infrastructure and Efficiency Grant represent one of the most significant structural investments in South Africa's TVET sector since institutional consolidation. It has materially improved teaching and learning environments, modernised workshops, renovated classrooms, and expanded student residences.

These improvements directly enhance educational quality, student retention, and occupational training standards. However, the transformative potential of the CIEG is constrained by institutional capacity weaknesses and uneven implementation.

Infrastructure reform must therefore be embedded within a broader system-strengthening agenda that integrates governance reform, lecturer development, curriculum innovation, and sustained maintenance planning.

The CIEG has laid the foundation for quality enhancement in the TVET sector. The next phase must ensure that capital investment translates consistently into improved student outcomes and labour market responsiveness.

19. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Funding Volatility and Declining Long-Term Trend

- CIEG allocations fluctuate significantly year to year, showing an overall flat or declining pattern, which undermines long-term planning and causes delays due to mid-year disbursements.
 - How will DHET and National Treasury stabilise the CIEG to ensure predictable multi-year allocations and prevent funding releases from arriving only mid-year?
- The uniform, one-size-fits-all allocation model fails to account for Colleges operating across multiple campuses and learning sites.
 - The DHET, working with the National Treasury, should review this model to ensure fair allocation informed by the needs.

Structural Inequities Between Colleges

- Funding is disproportionately concentrated among a small subset of colleges with higher capacity, leaving rural and low-capacity institutions behind.
 - What measures will Parliament introduce to ensure a more equitable allocation model so that low-capacity or rural colleges are not perpetually disadvantaged?
 - What lessons can be shared across Colleges to improve their infrastructure management capacity?

Severe Student Accommodation Shortages

- Only a minority of colleges received CIEG funding for student housing, despite national need; many beds remain non-functional or unoccupied; estimated refurbishment deficit is –R3.76 billion.
 - What is Parliament's plan to address the student accommodation crisis, including refurbishing non-functional beds, and will funding be dedicated for TVET residence upgrades?

Insufficient Institutional Capacity

- Colleges lack built-environment professionals (project managers, engineers, QS), and the withdrawal of CIEG-funded PM posts worsened delivery capacity.
 - Will Parliament mandate minimum technical staffing norms or reinstate funding for critical infrastructure posts to prevent chronic capacity shortages?

Procurement Delays and Underspending

- Procurement processes take 3–6 months, and late disbursements cause underspending, leading to subsequent withheld allocations.
 - What procurement reforms will be enacted to shorten SCM turnaround times and ensure colleges can spend funds within the same financial year?

External Disruptions: Construction Mafia and Municipal Approvals

- Projects face site shutdowns and intimidation due to community/business forums (“construction mafia”), and there are lengthy municipal plan-approval delays.

- What intergovernmental mechanisms can Parliament introduce to protect TVET projects from construction-related disruptions and to fast-track municipal approvals?

Deteriorating and Non-Functional Infrastructure

- Workshops, laboratories, and residences remain non-functional due to deteriorated conditions and deferred maintenance. ICT upgrades are installed but often not activated.
 - How will Parliament ensure proper maintenance funding and enforce compliance to prevent infrastructure from falling into disrepair shortly after upgrades?

Misalignment Between Policy Priorities and Funding Allocation

- Although policy emphasises rural student support and accommodation needs, CIEG funding for residences remains inconsistent and limited.
 - How will Parliament ensure that CIEG allocations align with strategic priorities such as rural access, student accommodation, and compliance backlogs?

Weak Link Between Infrastructure and Teaching Quality

- Infrastructure gains are uneven due to project delays and capacity challenges, limiting improvements in occupational training and compliance.
 - How will Parliament ensure that infrastructure investment directly supports QCTO and Centres of Specialisation requirements to strengthen teaching and learning outcomes?

Dysfunctional Capital Investment Pipeline

- Funding volatility, capacity gaps, procurement delays, and external disruptions collectively undermine infrastructure delivery across the TVET sector.
 - What systemic reforms will Parliament introduce to strengthen the entire infrastructure delivery chain—from planning to procurement to project completion?

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