



Dear Stakeholder

It is my privilege to write to you as the new Executive Director of Economic Research Southern Africa (ERSA), effective February 2024. I am honoured to lead this organisation, which has, since its inception in 2004, strived to be a cornerstone for economic research. I am committed to our vision: A Southern Africa where high-quality economic research informs policies that contribute to economic growth.

Despite some signs of post-pandemic recovery, Southern Africa continues to face significant economic challenges. Persistent inflation has kept policy rates high, fiscal balances continue to deteriorate, and various structural issues hinder economic productivity. It is clear that our region needs robust economic growth, and at ERSA, we believe that rigorous economic research is key to finding solutions to these complex challenges.

Economic research can inform and shape public policy, bridging the gap between academia and practical applications. ERSA is dedicated to supporting this research by fostering an environment where economists can address the critical policy questions of the time. Our mission is to drive the volume, quality, and relevance of economic research to effectively shape public policy.

To advance our mission and achieve our vision, ERSA is focused on five core objectives:

1. **Cultivating a network of researchers and linking them to policymakers, civil society and the media:** We aim to foster connections among economic researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders to identify and address key economic policy questions as well as encourage collaboration and communication.
2. **Developing research capacity:** ERSA supports and coordinates formal skills programmes and creates opportunities for engagement with leading economists from around the world.
3. **Supporting a research agenda that responds to the most important economic policy questions:** We act as a platform for policymakers and researchers to engage in dialogue that results in the articulation of the policy-relevant research questions.
4. **Translating research into policy:** We provide a platform for dialogue between researchers and policymakers to facilitate the uptake of research in policy.
5. **Disseminating research findings:** One of our goals is to ensure that research findings and recommendations reach a broader audience to encourage informed public discourse.

ERSA has four primary mechanisms designed to achieve these objectives:

- **Working Paper Series:** This is our primary platform for policy-relevant academic research papers, providing useful feedback to researchers. To incentivise quality, we will be offering monetary rewards for papers approved for our working paper series, with additional rewards for those subsequently accepted by academic journals.

- **Policy Paper Series:** Policy papers are focused on providing policy options for specific challenges with a quick turnaround addressing immediate policy concerns. These will be solicited directly from researchers.
- **Policy Briefs:** Concise documents that extract key insights from our working and policy papers, making them accessible to a broader audience.
- **Seminars and Conferences:** We organise these events to facilitate discussions among researchers and between researchers and policymakers, fostering networking and refining policy recommendations. We currently have four conferences planned over the next twelve months:
  1. Understanding Macroeconomic Regimes and their implications for modelling and policymaking (SAMNET, July 2024)
  2. Cities and Growth (October 2024)
  3. Infrastructure and Growth (December 2024), and
  4. Back to Inflation (April 2025)

While the key elements of ERSA's mission have always been central to our work, we have prioritised certain objectives over others. We have explored various strategies over the years to advance our vision, drawing on the rich institutional knowledge within ERSA. Although I am new to the role, I am committed to learning from our past experiences and using those insights to guide our path forward.

To further strengthen our connections and shape our future strategy, I plan to engage closely with our stakeholders. In 2024, I will visit every South African university's economics department and work with policymakers to ensure our approach aligns with current needs and opportunities. In 2025, I plan to move beyond South Africa's borders. While our vision and mission remain constant, our strategy is dynamic and responsive. We are dedicated to evolving in ways that best serve our stakeholders and advance our shared goals.

We believe that ERSA can play a crucial role in shaping the economic policy landscape in Southern Africa. Through rigorous research, collaborative partnerships, and accessible communication, we aim to contribute meaningfully to the economic growth and development of our region.

I am excited to work with you and other stakeholders to advance ERSA's mission and contribute to the economic growth and development of Southern Africa. Thank you for your continued support, and I invite you to join us on this journey as we work together to create a brighter future.

Kind regards,



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**Fouché Venter**  
**Executive Director**  
**Economic Research Southern Africa**