



Funda Uphumelele National Reading Study Terms of Reference for Language and Literacy Specialists

April 2024

Position:	2 x Language and Literacy Specialists (per language)
Language:	All 11 official written languages
Remuneration:	R2000 daily rate. Number of days capped at 58 days (may be extended).
Type of Contract:	Consulting
Duration of Contract:	12 months
Applicant Closing Date:	15 April 2024

1. Introduction

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) is leading the Funda Uphumelele Reading Study (FURS) which will be the first study to develop language-appropriate assessments aligned to the newly developed reading benchmarks. The assessment will measure core skills for reading in African languages with appropriate word structures, complexity and meaning for early grades. In addition, teacher guides with language-specific strategies addressing gaps (where learners do not reach the reading benchmarks) will be developed. The results of the FURS learnings and resources will be used to further strengthen the curriculum in various ways.

A consortium of donors is partnering with the DBE to support this project. In partnership with the consortium, the Department seeks to contract Language and Literacy Specialists to develop learner assessments and provide training on assessment administration.

NOTE: The Zenex Foundation is acting as the fund administrator for the project on behalf of the donors and the Department. The specialists will therefore be contracted by Zenex Foundation and seconded to the Department for the duration of the project. Therefore, whilst the Zenex Foundation will be contracting for this position, the work will be physically based at the DBE and the successful candidate will be supervised and report to a Technical Working Group (TWG).

2. Background

Through participation in the Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study (PIRLS) that assesses reading comprehension at the Grade 4 level, South Africa has been able to track the percentage of Grade 4 learners who are attaining grade-appropriate reading comprehension. South Africa's low reading comprehension levels measured in Grade 4 as reflected in PIRLS indicates that the setbacks in early literacy development emerge in the Foundation Phase (Grades R-3). This means a high number of learners have problems with skills that precede reading comprehension. These are foundational and technical aspects of reading that relate to knowledge of the written code. There are currently no national assessments in South Africa measuring these early technical skills.



3. Programme Description and Outcomes

The survey will be split into 5 phases as described below.

PHASE 1: DEVELOPMENT

Phase 1 will be around the development of instruments. Approximately 12 instruments per language will be developed. These instruments will be developed by two linguists and/or Foundation Phase specialists per language through an iterative. This process will be coordinated and overseen by the Department's Research Coordination, Monitoring, and Evaluation (RCME) directorate.

PHASE 2: PILOTING

The survey will consist of at least two pilots to test the appropriateness of the new instruments. A third pilot may be conducted if necessary. Data collection for the **pilots** will be limited to **six provinces**, however all **11 languages** will be reached.

PHASE 3: ANALYSIS AND REPORT WRITING

Analysis and report writing of all the data will commence in Phase 2 as the pilots begin and continue through Phase 3. The main data analysis will be led internally by RCME, with additional quantitative analysis capacity added if necessary.

PHASE 4: CURRICULUM AND SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING

Specific curriculum-strengthening efforts and deliverables are detailed below.

- I. EGRA Update and Training
- II. Strengthening of the CAPS Curriculum
- III. Whole School Evaluation Programme
- IV. Remedial Support for Early Skills
- V. Mother Tongue based Bilingual Education (MtbBE) Implementation

PHASE 5: DISSEMINATION

A public dissemination to share the findings from the research as well as all the curriculum strengthening will be held where all stakeholders, including affected directorates within the DBE, provinces, NGOs, and donors.

4. Timeline

ACTIVITIES	Q4 23-24			Q1 24-25			Q2 24-25			Q3 24-25			Q4 24-25			Q1 25-26		
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
Recruitment of Language Team																		
Appoint Data Collection SP																		
FUNS Instrument Development																		
FUNS Pilot 1 and Revisions																		



FUNS Pilot 2 and Revisions																			
FUNS Pilot 3 and Revisions																			
Instrument Finalisation																			
Fieldwork Training																			
Data Collection																			
Analysis and Report Writing																			
Launch and Dissemination																			

KEY
 **Activity**  **No Activity**

5. Scope of Work

This work is an initiative of the DBE managed through the Research Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation (RCME) Directorate with whom the language specialists will be in direct contact.

Two language and literacy specialists for each of the 11 Languages of Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LoLTAs) will be appointed to form a team along with a language group Junior Language Practitioner. The purpose of this role is twofold. The first is to lead the learner assessment development by originating, translating, and/or revising texts and instruments and critically assessing assessments using existing instruments from the current work being done on other African languages to inform reading practice in the sector. The second will be to provide support to the data collection team by training the field officers who will be administering the assessments to learners. The appointed specialists will also be required to contribute to the Funda Uphumelele Reading Study.

a. Key Duties and Responsibilities

The successful applicants will primarily be responsible for:

- Undertaking a critical review of existing reading assessments in their selected language.
- Developing reading passages and other assessments for grades 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 learners that will test learners' oral, reading and writing proficiency.
- Contributing to the development of appropriate instruments for assessing early-grade reading skills in their selected language.
- Reviewing, revising, and/or the re-development of instruments based on feedback obtained from the data analysis from the pilots.
- Translating to and revising texts in their selected language.
- Conducting quantitative and/or qualitative analysis to determine the internal validity and reliability of any existing instruments and whether the instruments are fair.
- Training fieldworkers for three pilots and main data collection through demonstration and practice of various designed assessments and preparing them on how to follow assessment protocols.
- Moderating written learner assessments from the pilot data collections.



- Observing pilot testing of instruments conducted by fieldworkers to ensure that fieldworkers are administering the learner assessments with an acceptable degree of reliability.
- Assisting/joining in consultations, meetings, and workshops as required.
- Providing inputs or contributing to the final reports.
- Preparing for and presenting at the launch and other dissemination channels.

b. Required Education, Skills, and Experience

The requisite candidate must have these skills and experience:

▪ Education and Knowledge

- Masters or PhD degree, with an undergraduate degree in their specified language, linguistics, or a related field.
- Insight into the education sector landscape and trends in South Africa.
- Comprehensive understanding of social research methods such as sample surveys and impact evaluation methods.

▪ Skills

- Excellent written and oral communication skills in English (including communicating complex technical issues to diverse audiences) are required.
- Excellent first language level fluency in oral and written communication skills in their specified language.
- Excellent translation and versioning skills to and from specified languages.
- Ability to evaluate complex data to prepare documentation, reports, and recommendations and ability to communicate effectively with relevant stakeholders.
- Proficiency in basic computer applications, such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel, and emails.
- Test development skill and qualifications will be an advantage.
- Strong conceptual thinking and analytical skills.
- Possess a valid drivers' license and willing to undertake multi-provincial travel.

▪ Experience and Expertise

- At least 5-10 years of practical experience with solid knowledge in education policies, standards and literacy programming.
- At least 3 years' experience in training Foundation or Intermediate Phase education students.
- Background in applying quantitative and/or qualitative techniques that aim to improve reading and writing strategies.
- Solid knowledge of and experience in researching early-grade reading assessments.
- Proven ability to work in teams and specialist groups.

c. Work Assignment Overview

For overall time and work done by the specialists, a **ceiling remuneration claimable is for 58 days** at a daily rate of R2 000 (R116 000). For the activities where only one specialist is required, nomination will depend on strengths and capacity. We require that each specialist does at least one pilot observation and marking moderation. Each specialist will submit a claim after **every deliverable is submitted and approved** by the Technical Working Group (TWG). Where travel is initiated by the project, the costs of the accommodation and travel will be covered by the project.



d. Terms of the application

The deadline for the submission of applications is **15 April 2024**. Applicants must specify which of the languages they are applying for. Applications should include:

- Cover letter (detailing relevant experience and expertise)
- Curriculum Vitae (with three contactable references for similar/related work done)
- Example of report/publication written (anonymised if necessary)
- Example of assessment developed (if applicable and within confidentiality agreements)
- Proof of qualifications

Please send enquiries and submit the application to Zwane.Z@dbe.gov.za; and cc Sebaeng.L@dbe.gov.za by the deadline.

Successful applicants will receive confirmation of shortlisting **one week** after the submission deadline. If you have not received an email or telephonic confirmation in that time, please consider your application unsuccessful.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited for an in-person interview at the DBE offices. As part of the interview, applicants will complete a written assessment as well as an exercise in the additional language identified.