



Funda Uphumelele National Reading Study Terms of Reference for Junior Language Practitioners

April 2024

Position:	4 x Junior Language Practitioners: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1x fluent in Afrikaans• 1x fluent in Sesotho, Sepedi and/or Setswana• 1x fluent in Xitsonga and/or Tshivenda• 1x fluent in Siswati, IsiNdebele, IsiZulu, and/or IsiXhosa
Remuneration:	R1000 daily rate. Number of days capped at 50 days (may be extended)
Type of Contract:	Consulting
Duration:	12 months
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 Junior Language Practitioners to develop learner assessments, provide training on assessment administration, and report on the findings.

NOTE: The Zenex Foundation is acting as the fund administrator for the project on behalf of the donors and the Department. Whilst the Zenex Foundation will be contracting for this position, the incumbents will work with the respective Language Specialist and report directly to the project's Project Manager.

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.

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 with the support of the Junior



Language Practitioners. This process will be coordinated and overseen by the department’s Research Coordination, Monitoring, and Evaluation (RCME) directorate and the Technical Working Group (TWG).

PHASE 2: PILOTING

The survey will consist of three pilots to test the appropriateness of the new instruments. 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 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.

3. 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																		

Activity No Activity



4. Scope of Work

This work is an initiative of the DBE managed through the Research Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation (RCME) Directorate with whom the Junior Language Practitioner will be in direct contact as part of the language team. The purpose of this role is to support the instrument development by compiling and documenting the originating, translating, and/or revising of texts and instruments. Each of the Junior Language Practitioners will be assigned to 2-4 or more of the 11 language specialist teams. **Applicants must specify which of the above languages they are applying for.**

a. Key Duties and Responsibilities

The successful applicants will primarily be responsible for:

- Supporting the development of appropriate reading passages and other assessments for grades 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 learners that will test learners' oral, reading and writing proficiency.
- Supporting the development of appropriate instruments for assessing early-grade reading skills in their selected languages.
- Supporting the reviewing, revising, and/or the re-development of instruments based on feedback obtained from the data analysis from the pilots.
- Supporting the translation and revision of texts to their selected language.
- Documenting the development process and revision of the instruments for reporting purposes.
- Providing support for training fieldworkers for three pilots through demonstration and practice of various designed assessments and preparing them on how to follow assessment protocols.
- Observing pilot testing of instruments conducted by fieldworkers to ensure that fieldworkers are administering the learner assessments with an acceptable degree of reliability.

b. Personal Research Output (optional; in personal time)

The Junior Language Practitioner may, with the consent of the Technical Working Group and subject to the Ethical Approvals and Intellectual Property agreements pertaining to African Languages Benchmarking, use data and experiences from the project for his/her own research work if, for example, the Junior Language Practitioner is studying towards a Masters or Doctoral degree.

c. Required Qualifications

The successful candidates should be in possession of an Honours degree, with an undergraduate degree in linguistics or applied language studies or related qualification. A focus on early grade literacy will be an added advantage.

d. Knowledge/Expertise/Skills Required

- Solid knowledge and background in conducting research using qualitative and/or quantitative techniques in African languages.
- Ability to draft clear and concise documentation, reports and recommendations and ability to communicate effectively with relevant stakeholders including communicating complex technical issues to diverse audiences.
- Proven ability of working in teams and specialist groups.
- Strong conceptual thinking and analytical skills.
- Excellent communication, presentation, and translation skills.
- Excellent translation and versioning to and from specified languages.



- Excellent skills in basic computer applications, such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel, and emails.
- Valid drivers' license.

e. Language Proficiency

- Applicants must display excellent oral and written proficiency in the language/s that they are applying for and should have a qualification in that language. Proficiency will be evaluated in the interview phase. Language proficiencies sought are:
 1. Afrikaans
 2. Xitsonga **or** Tshivenda (advantage if proficient in both)
 3. Sesotho, Sepedi **or** Setswana
 4. Siswati, IsiNdebele, IsiZulu, **or** IsiXhosa (advantage if proficient in Siswati or IsiNdebele)
- Excellent written and oral communication skills in English are required for all applicants. English language written skills will be evaluated in the initial review of an applicant's submission as well as through the submission of a sample report or research paper.

f. Work Assignment Overview

For overall time and work done by the Junior Language Practitioners, a **ceiling remuneration claimable is for 50 days** at a daily rate of R1 000 (R50 000) per Junior Language Practitioner. Each Junior Language Practitioner will submit a claim after **every deliverable is submitted and approved** by the Technical Working Group (TWG). Details of deliverables will be provided on appointment. Where travel is initiated by the project, the costs of the accommodation and travel will be covered by the project.

g. 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)
- Curriculum Vitae (with three contactable references for similar/related work done)
- Example of report/publication written (anonymised if necessary)
- 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.