



A decade of early grade literacy research in South Africa: lessons and data

Terms of Reference: Qualitative Research

29 April 2024

Type of Contract:	Consulting
Contract Cost:	R300 000
Duration of Contract:	6 months
Applicant Closing Date:	14 May 2024

1. Background

The Early Grade Reading Studies (EGRS) are a series of large-scale Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) investigating how to teach reading effectively in the early grades. These studies have been led by the South African Department of Basic Education (DBE) in collaboration with academics of various universities and international donor organisations. The work has contributed to a growing consensus around the importance of improving South Africa's reading outcomes and has generated an evidence base of the kinds of interventions that impact reading outcomes and how the change process works.

2. Research questions and scope of the work

The work proposed here is a case study on government-led research. The two main questions and subquestions to be addressed in the case study are:

1. What are the unique and replicable lessons learnt from 10 years of early-grade reading studies in a developing country context?
 - a. What are the implementation and evaluation lessons learnt?
2. What has the influence of these studies been?
 - a. What are the direct and indirect influences and spin-offs?
3. What creates a successful government research hub and how can it be strengthened or replicated?
 - a. What are the political economy, prioritisation and resourcing considerations for government-led research?

This work is an initiative of the DBE managed through the Research Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation (RCME) Directorate with whom the qualitative researcher(s) will be in direct contact. The work is supported by the Zenex Foundation and forms part of the What Works Hub initiatives.

3. Specific undertaking

The consultant will be expected to conduct qualitative research through interviews and an analysis of reports. Specific activities and deliverables will include:



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- a. A desktop review of programme documents and reports, including EGRS reports and national plans;
- b. The development of data collection instruments that are based on international best practice, but adapted for the local context;
- c. Interviews with selected officials, researchers, funders and partners at the national and provincial level - this will not exceed 30 interviews. It is anticipated that at least 10 of these will be in-person interviews;
- d. An organisational comparison between the national office and at least three provinces (Mpumalanga, North West and one proposed by the service provider) and at least one think tank;
- e. A final case study report including a review of relevant literature and programme documents to substantiate and interpret the findings;
- f. Data collected including recordings and transcriptions.

4. Timelines and level of effort

An in-person design workshop will be held in Johannesburg **within two weeks of appointment**. Periodic engagement with the Project Management Team on milestones will be expected, these may be in person or virtual. It is expected that the whole case study work will be completed by October 2024.

A validation workshop will be held as part of the report finalisation.

5. Required education, skills and experience

The applicant must submit a brief proposal that sets out how they will undertake this work. Applicants can also collaborate with other individuals and organisations to ensure that the required capacity and expertise is available within their team. The proposal must include:

- A brief outline of your understanding of the task;
- An outline of the process, and methodology that you propose;
- A plan with high-level activities, period and budget. The budget should indicate costs for different activities with travel costs specified separately;
- Experience and expertise of the organisation and team that will undertake the study;
- List of team members (where applicable) - this includes brief CVs of the team leader and researchers;
- Two contactable references;
- A sample of previous work conducted that is similar to the planned work - this may include reports or tools.

Please send enquiries and submit the application to Malemela.L@dbe.gov.za and Mohohlwane.N@dbe.gov.za by **14 May 2024**.