

# Terms of Reference for Project Associate:

<b>Position/Salary Range:</b>	<b>Early Grade Reading Study: Project Associate</b> <b>R18 000 per month</b> <b>6 month contract, renewable</b>
<b>Open To:</b>	All South African citizens and permanent residents with valid work permits at the time of application
<b>Location:</b>	Department of Basic Education 222 Struben Street Pretoria, South Africa
<b>Opening:</b>	May 19, 2017
<b>Closing:</b>	June 2, 2017

**Wits Health Consortium, on behalf of the Department of Basic Education, seeks applicants for the above position.**

## **BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT**

### **Summary**

The Department of Basic Education is expanding its research into alternative ways to strengthen the teaching and learning in Foundation Phase, by building on the first Early Grade Reading Study. This study focused on strengthening the teaching of reading in home language in the Foundation Phase. Following on this, the second study will focus on the early acquisition of English as First Additional Language in preparation for the language transition learners face in Grade 4.

Both interventions will consist of scripted lesson plans, additional reading resources and instructional coaching and training. Two alternative strategies to training and coaching will be used: (i) the traditional face-to-face format; (ii) a combination of face-to-face training and an ICT component that includes tablets and cell phone messaging to the teacher. The cost-effectiveness of these two programmes will be evaluated relative to each other and relative to a control group of schools using a rigorous impact evaluation design.

### **Motivation**

The majority of South African children transition to English as language of instruction in Grade 4, therefore making a certain level of competence in English foundational to all subsequent learning. The SACMEQ study of 2007 indicates that roughly 1 in 3 South African children do not reach grade 6 having acquired even basic reading literacy in English. Yet the majority are being taught using English as the Language of Learning and Teaching from grade 4. This no doubt feeds into the substantial inequalities in educational achievement are established early in primary school. Early interventions aimed at improving the acquisition of English competency amongst poor children can, therefore, be expected to have larger effects than interventions later in the school programme.

## Overview of Programme

The project will target Grade 1 children in 180 schools and will be implemented over two years. A lottery will be used to select a comparison group of 80 schools and two intervention groups of 50 schools each. There will be two waves of data collection to facilitate project evaluation: February 2017 (baseline) and November 2018 (endline).

## Implementing Partners

The project is an initiative of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in partnership with the University of the Witwatersrand's School of Education. The project is financially supported by USAID. Three service providers will be appointed, one who will manage the implementation of the project interventions, the second who will be developing the tablet application with the electronic lesson plans, and the third who will conduct the assessments of reading proficiency, administer additional background questionnaires and to conduct occasional spot-checks to monitor project implementation.

The project is being managed through the Research Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit in the DBE together with the Office of the Director-General in the DBE. Additional project management and administrative support is required – this position is designed to meet that need. As such, the Project Intern will be physically based in the DBE (Pretoria) on a full-time basis, and will be supervised by DBE staff. The major responsibilities will include project administration and communication (40%), monitoring of project activities in the field (20%), assisting with report writing (20%), capacity building activities such as receiving training on research methods (10%) and other miscellaneous activities (10%). The scope of work is described in more detail below.

## MAJOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### A. Project Management and monitoring (30%)

The successful candidate will not be solely responsible for all aspects of project management – there is a project management team for the project (Dr Stephen Taylor, Ms Nuga Deliwe, Prof Brahm Fleisch) but they require assistance.

The Project Associate will be responsible for coordination and communication amongst all stakeholders in the project: Donors, the data collection agency, the service provider for the interventions, and the provincial education departments. In addition to the logistical dimensions of project management, there will be some monitoring of project activities to ensure the service providers are fulfilling their obligations.

Illustrative responsibilities include:

- Arranging project management meetings, steering committee meetings, and other meetings with stakeholders;
- Trips to project sites (schools and training venues) to monitor project activities, about 2 days a month;
- Drafting letters between stakeholders, e.g. from DBE to provincial education departments, or to school principals;
- Monitoring contractual obligations between various stakeholders and service providers and advising the project management team of any arising issues to be aware of;
- Receiving, filing and analyzing project implementation information received from service providers, e.g. attendance registers at teacher training sessions.
- Conducting routine monitoring and evaluation of project progress by reviewing workplans and reports, conducting site visits, and maintaining ongoing contact with implementing partners. The Project Associate will monitor program activities to ensure compliance with intended program design;
- Undertaking regular analyses of the financial information of project activities, including disbursements from donors to the fund management facility and from the fund managers to the service providers.

### **B. Report writing (30%)**

The Project Associate will be responsible for drafting project progress reports to donors to satisfy each donor's particular reporting requirements. Responsibilities in this area will include:

- Assisting with applications for funding;
- Drafting progress reports to donors;
- Summarizing financial reports obtained from the fund manager and incorporating these into reports to donors;

### **C. Data cleaning and analysis (20%)**

The EGRS will generate a considerable amount of learner performance data and background information about schools, teachers and parents. This will inform the research and evaluation component of the project. A Research Team is responsible for the data analysis and impact evaluation reports. However, this team will require support with the data cleaning and analysis from the Project Associate. Illustrative examples of tasks include:

- Transferring data between statistical packages, such as Microsoft Excel, STATA and SPSS;
- Deriving new variables, such as reading test scores;
- Conducting data integrity checks, e.g. investigating patterns indicating fieldworker fraud;
- Analysis of data, ranging from descriptive analysis to running multivariate regression

### **D. Capacity building of DBE staff (10%)**

The Project Associate will work in the Research Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit and will work closely with other members of this unit. The Project Associate should assist junior research staff of the DBE with research skills on an informal basis and through formal sessions on data analysis methods.

### **E. Other Duties (10%)**

The Project Associate will respond flexibly to various other work-related tasks at the discretion of the supervisor. These may include, amongst other miscellaneous tasks:

- Attending meetings on behalf of the EGRS;
- Making presentations on behalf of the EGRS;
- Reading and summarizing literature relevant to the EGRS

### **F. Personal research output (Optional; in personal time)**

The Project Associate may, with the consent of the Research Team and subject to the Ethical Approvals and Intellectual Property agreements pertaining to the EGRS, use data and experiences from the EGRS for his/her own research work if, for example, the Project Associate is studying towards a Masters or Doctoral degree.

## **REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS:**

### **Education:**

A Bachelor's Degree or equivalent formal education qualification. Qualifications in a field relevant to development or education will be an advantage. An Honors or Master's Degree in a related field is highly desirable.

### **Prior Work Experience:**

Prior work experience is not absolutely critical, but is strongly preferred. Work experience in research institutions, NGOs working in the education sector, or working with or for the South African government will be desirable.

### **Language Proficiency:**

Excellent written and oral communication skills in English (Level IV English) are required. English language written skills will be evaluated in the initial review of an applicant's submission by a review of the Cover Letter and of the CV itself as well as through the submission of a sample report or research paper. Oral English skills will be evaluated in the interview phase.

The Project Associate must be able to manipulate and analyze complex data and to prepare reports for various audiences, including high level government officials and private sector stakeholders. The Project

Associate must be able to communicate complex technical issues to diverse audiences. Proficiency in other South African official languages is desired, but not required.

**Knowledge:**

The successful candidate must demonstrate a good understanding of the education sector in South Africa. The candidate should also be able to demonstrate understanding of social research methods such as sample surveys and impact evaluation methods.

**Skills and Abilities:**

Must be able to obtain, analyze and evaluate complex data to prepare precise and accurate reports and oral briefings of information received. Skills sufficient to consult with and lead, orally and in written form, a wide variety of professional leaders in the academic, public and private sectors. The candidate should have skills sufficient to interact productively with individuals of diverse cultural, socio-economic and educational backgrounds.

The Project Associate must be capable of working independently on a number of tasks simultaneously with minimal supervision.

The Project Associate should have a valid driver's license and access to their own car with which to make trips to the field for monitoring purposes. Travel costs will be compensated for.

The Project Associate should at least have some experience working with statistical software used for analysis of large datasets. A broad knowledge of basic computer applications, such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint and email software is necessary. The ability to work in Microsoft Excel is required. The ability to work in other statistical packages such as SPSS or STATA will be strongly advantageous.

**Evaluation Criteria and Weights:**

1. Education/Weighted 10% based on initial application review;
2. English Language Skills/Weighted 15% based on application review, sample of writing and interview;
3. Prior Work or Research Experience/Weighted 15% based on application review and interview;
4. Knowledge/Weighted 30% based on sample of writing and interview; and
5. Skills and Abilities/Weighted 30% based on sample of writing and interview.

**How the Selection will be made:**

The successful candidate will be selected based upon the following:

1. a preliminary review of the applicant's submitted package (which includes the Cover Letter, sample of writing and CV) to establish that minimum educational and English writing fluency requirements are met; and
2. a personal or telephone/DVC interview; and
3. reference checks.

**Applicability:**

This position is open to all South African citizens and permanent residents with valid work permits at the time of application.

**To Apply:**

**ONLY applicants who meet the minimum educational and English language fluency requirements as stated in the solicitation document will be considered. Interested applicants who do not meet these requirements are encouraged NOT to apply since these applications will not be considered.**

For an application package to be considered complete, please follow the following instructions and submit your application through one of the channels mentioned below:

1. Ensure that your application is accompanied by a Cover Letter,
2. Include a CV of no more than 3 pages,
3. Include a sample of your writing, such as a research paper or report. If you do not already have a suitable piece of writing, then you may write a short essay (700 – 1000 words) expressing your opinion on the following topic: “What is the main challenge South Africa faces in providing quality education for all?”
4. Ensure that all communications (including your Cover Letter) includes the Announcement Reference # and the Title of the Position(s) for which you are applying.

Failure to comply with these instructions may result in your application being considered “non-responsive” and eliminated from further consideration.

**Queries and applications should be emailed to Dr Stephen Taylor (stephentaylor17@gmail.com), copying Ms Nompumelelo Mohohlwane ([Mohohlwane.N@dbe.gov.za](mailto:Mohohlwane.N@dbe.gov.za)).**