

HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

Request For Information

BID DESCRIPTION: APPOINTMENT OF A SERVICE PROVIDER(S) TO COLLECT DATA FOR THE SABSSM QUALITATIVE PILOT COMPONENT

CLOSING DATE FOR SUBMISSION: 9th September 2025

# 1. BACKGROUND

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The South African National HIV Prevalence, Incidence, Behaviour and Communication Survey (SABSSM) has refined its communication strategies over time to increase participation across various population groups. However, the survey continues to face challenges in achieving high response rates from certain sub-populations, including participants from gated communities, affluent areas, White and Indian groups, urban residents, children, and men, posing challenges in obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the evolving HIV epidemic in South Africa. To address this, SABSSM will conduct a mixed-methods study to develop and pilot strategies aimed at improving participation in these hard-to-reach population groups. A qualitative study will guide the development of a quantitative pilot survey aimed at testing and refining these strategies, particularly in areas with historically low response rates, as observed in the 2022 SABSSM VI survey.

The study aims to identify and address barriers to household entry for data collection, optimise the engagement process, and explore factors influencing participants' willingness to provide blood samples. It will also examine how different stages of the process i.e. community entry, household entry, interviews, and blood collection are interconnected and impact each other’s success.

This exploratory qualitative study will use approximately 18 semi-structured interviews and 18 focus group discussions across different subgroups and geographical areas, purposively sampling participants from diverse groups, including White and Indian individuals, from Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, and Limpopo provinces. Participants will also include residents from gated communities, affluent, urban, and rural areas, gatekeepers (religious and traditional leaders, civil society representatives), and parents or caregivers of children aged 14 years and younger, along with men. Data collection will be guided by local community dynamics, with initial contacts made through community leaders and organizations. Publicity will be spread via WhatsApp groups, social media, and local channels. Interviews and focus group discussion will be conducted in person, online, or by phone based on participant preferences. Outreach to parents and caregivers will be done through social media, clinics, and schools, with minimal disruption to school and healthcare activities.

# 2. SCOPE OF WORK

The service provider is expected to undertake the following:

* **Recruit and supervise**
	+ Recruit qualified and experienced qualitative researchers to carry out focus group discussions.
	+ The researchers need to have the following demographics and also be from the specified provinces:
		- 2 Indian (KwaZulu-Natal)
		- 2 White (who speak Afrikaans and English; Gauteng)
		- 2 African (who speak isiZulu; KwaZulu-Natal)
		- 2 African (who are multilingual: isiZulu/Sesotho/ Setswana; Gauteng)
		- 2 African (who speak Sepedi/Tsonga; Limpopo).
* **Community stakeholder engagement and recruitment**: liaise with community stakeholders in order to organize focus group discussions (utilizing the communications toolkit)
* **Focus Group Discussions**: Conduct 18 focus group discussions in person or online.
	+ Eight (8) in KZN (eThekwini and King Cetshwayo)
	+ Six (6) in Gauteng (City of Johannesburg), and
	+ Four (4) in Limpopo (Tzaneen).
* **Recordings:** All voice recordings of discussions should be sent to HSRC within 24 hours of being conducted.
* **Debriefing**: Provide daily progress updates, and have continuous engagement with the HSRC team, as well as attend one operational meeting per week.
* Follow prescribed **ethical procedures** and protocols outlined during training.
* **Training**: Attend compulsory 4–5-day HSRC training.
* Provide **training / orientation** regarding its own fieldwork logistics and organizational operations.
* Share their **SOPs and manual** prior to the HSRC training.
* Ensure all data are **labelled**, **stored and transferred** according to agreed and normative standards.
* **Transcription & Translation**: All recorded data should be transcribed and translated into English within stipulated timelines (within six weeks after a focus group discussion has been concluded).
* **Fieldwork Report** : Provide final field report on completion of the project.

**Other**

* **Safety**: Bidders should take precaution to always ensure the safety of Fieldworkers. They should provide transport that is safe – vehicles that transport Fieldworkers must be roadworthy and presentable. Bidders must provide a daily subsistence allowance as well as accommodation for the Fieldworkers when sleep-outs are required and pay them a market related salary. Should any safety incident or accident occur the bidders should report it to the HSRC and police immediately.
* **Safety guidelines**: Provide risk management guidelines to ensure health and safety of staff and equipment.
* In the event of t**heft/loss or damage**, relevant documents that will be made available to the successful Service Provider must be completed. These documents (completed) must be submitted to the HSRC immediately.
* The successful Service Provider must ensure that the **Fieldworkers do not abuse any substances such as drugs, alcohol etc.** while working on this HSRC project.
* Be **available on cell phone** during data collection to ensure that logistical issues are swiftly addressed.
* Respond to any queries that arise regarding the completed transcripts.
* Ensure that all completed transcripts are **uploaded onto the data capturing platform as per protocol**.
* Ensure that all researchers have **completed the required contract forms** (with the Service Provider) before starting the work.

# 3. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE HSRC

The HSRC will:

* Provide the protocol, manuals, SOPs, tools and permission letters (including printed documents for training and fieldwork)
* Participate in the training in order to guide the service provider.
* Lead community entry.
* Cover costs for training venue.
* Cover costs of attending training for service provider and their team.
* Provide branded materials to use in the field.
* Conduct oversight visits in the field.
* Maintain close communication with the service provider throughout the fieldwork.
* Data storage: set up data storage platform.

# 4. DELIVERABLES

The expected deliverables from the service provider include the following:

***Table 1: Activities to be covered by the successful bidder***

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| **Tasks**  | **Deliverables/Output**  |
| Attend data collection training session.    | All Fieldworkers under your supervision must attend training on the scheduled date at the correct location. They must sign the attendance register that will be provided by HSRC during training.  |
| Data collection preparation  | Following the training, bidders should role play with the field teams to ensure that the Fieldworkers are familiar with the questionnaire and do not make basic interpretive errors.  |
| Supervise all data collection as directed by HSRC.  | Ensure that all focus group discussions are scheduled and carried out within the agreed timeframes |
| Conduct focus group discussion | Data must be captured using the tablets provided by the HSRC. All focus group discussions must be conducted in a language and location preferred by the participants . At the end of fieldwork, all data will be submitted to the HSRC.  |
| Data  | Data in the form of fieldwork notes, voice recordings, verbatim transcripts, original language, translated transcripts, all properly labelled.  |
| Provide HSRC with a full name of Fieldworkers as they appear in ID book/card. Include photos of all Fieldworkers.  | HSRC will use this information to compile a database and will generate name tags for Fieldworkers to wear for the duration of the project when they are carrying out fieldwork activities.  |
| The HSRC will not accept any responsibility, from any claim, arising from the injury, death, loss or damage to property suffered by a Fieldworkers or his or her dependents, in the execution of his or her duties in terms of this agreement.  |
| It is agreed that there is no employer-employee relationship established between the HSRC and the individual Fieldworkers, and that the fieldworkers are appointed by the SERVICE PROVIDER, based on the minimum requirements as set out herein.  |
| The successful Service Provider will be responsible for the distribution, collection and safe return of the tablets to the HSRC. These tablets should be returned in the same condition as received at the inception of the project. Negligence will result in personal liability.  |
| The successful Service Provider will be provided with branded Bibs which must be cleaned and returned to HSRC in good condition. The final payment will only be transferred once the HSRC has received all the Tablets, chargers, battery banks and branded bibs in the same condition as received at the inception of the project. Negligence will result in personal liability.  |
| NO PAYMENT: Should any fraud pertaining to data be detected, i.e. fabricated focus group discussions, payment will be withheld.  |
| The final payment to the supplier will only be made once the quality of the work has been verified and accepted by HSRC Project team.  |

# 5. Mandatory requirements

Service provider to have a prove service record of qualitative research undertaken. Service provider to provide three (3) examples of previous work undertaken within the last five (5) years. Service provider to also provide three (3) contactable references.

# 6. TIMELINES

The successful Service Provider is expected to complete the task in no more than 4 **months** from the date that the Service Level Agreement has been signed by both parties.

Requisition advertised to potential services providers – **28th August 2025**

Compulsory briefing session will be on: **Date 2nd September** (online via Teams)

Closing date of the proposal: **9th September 2025**

# 7. CONTACT PERSON

**Dr Tebogo Gumede-Mazwai** **tgumede@hsrc.ac.za**