

Specification for the appointment of a supplier to provide Reverse-Billed data services for research applications

1. Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)

The HSRC is a statutory research council mandated to undertake and promote research in the human and social sciences. Its mandate and objectives are outlined in the Human Sciences Research Council Act, Act No. 17 of 2008. The HSRC conducts policy-relevant studies to inform the work of public-sector users, non-governmental organisations, the broader academic community, and international development agencies.

2. Background

The HSRC, under its mandate, conducts numerous research projects that are public-focused and required engagement with stakeholders at many levels. In facilitating this, the HSRC conducts large-scale research in the form of questionnaire-based surveys as well as; qualitative research, such as focus groups and individual interviews. The outputs of these social science investigations produce seminars and stakeholder events to facilitate engagement with findings; and provides access to data and publications via various online platforms.

Due to COVID-19, there has been a need to adopt virtual approaches for research data collection (qualitative and quantitative), as well as for running seminars and sharing research outputs. Considering this, the HSRC has been investigating various avenues for a more virtualised work and public engagement opportunities. These must continue to foster collaboration and co-creation, while ensuring that research participants, co-creators and HSRC staff and adequately protected, while still able to produce these vital research products.

The service offerings required under this request extends to include the provision to capabilities to the broader HSRC that emphasises research engagement and uptake, within a more democratised access model.

The contemporary situation in South Africa, technologically, infrastructurally, economically and socially has identified data cost as a significant barrier to democratic public participation in social science research. The adoption of *online research* and *reverse-billed data services* (RBDS) aims to reduce organisational cost, introduce significant organisation-wide process efficiencies, operationalise science research and communication in a manner that is accessible and democratic to all South Africans.

To effectively achieve this ambition, the HSRC wants to engage the services of a digital-partner to enable online and digital resources to be more widely adopted, while applying reverse-billing data technology to carry those costs on behalf of the HSRC, toward an integrated cost-effective solution.

3. Services Required

The Impact Centre wishes to appoint, via the HSRC SCM division, a suitable service provider for the provision the following services.

- **Reverse-billed data services for online content, websites (or pages)**
- **Reverse-billed data services for online surveys**
- **Reverse-billed data services for qualitative research (video / audio)**

General requirements for Reverse-billed data *service provider*:

- Portfolio of successful projects and partners in the provision of Reverse-billed services.
- Clear understanding of research projects, deliverables, timelines and security
- Dedicated project-based management tool to access institutional Reverse-billed data usage and statistics
- Experience in large-scale provision of Reverse-billed data services, applications or websites
- Experience in developing panel, targeted or general audience focused research solution on a Reverse-billed basis
- Experience in applying Reverse-billed data technology to qualitative remote interviews (using video conference technology on smartphones / tablets / desktops)

4. Inclusions and exclusions

The service provider **will be** responsible for:

- Provide a quotation for the scope of the desired work to be Reverse-billed
- Setup and management of the link required to be Reverse-billed

The service provider **will not be** responsible for:

- Development of content or online material to be Reverse-billed
- Development of online infrastructure to host online material (video, audio, websites)
- The direct quality or completeness of *survey response* due to design considerations

These services will be provided on a *per-project basis*, within the financial bounds of a maximum value within a Purchase Order (PO) and for the period not exceeding an initial 24 months. Following the *maximum PO value* or *the service period not exceeding 24 months* (whichever comes first) a new SCM process will be followed toward procuring these services.

5. Required response

Your proposal submission must include the technical and experience evidence including:

1. Portfolio of successful projects and partners in the provision of Reverse-billed services.
2. Clear understanding of research projects, deliverables, timelines and security
3. Dedicated management tool to access institutional Reverse-billed data usage and statistics
4. Experience in large-scale provision of Reverse-billed data services, applications or websites
5. Experience in developing panel, targeted or general audience focused research solution on a Reverse-billed basis
6. Experience in applying Reverse-billed data technology to qualitative remote interviews (using video conference technology on smartphones / tablets / desktop)
7. Contact information for at least 2 references on similar website projects involving public policy or research data collection.
8. Provide Average Costing for:
 - a. Reverse-billed data costs to online hosted **surveys** – per response / MB and any setup fees / miscellaneous costing (access fees / server fees)
 - b. Reverse-billed data costs to **websites (part or entire site)** – per MB and any setup fees / miscellaneous costing (access fees / server fees)
 - c. Reverse-billed data costs for **video / audio interviews / discussions** – per MB and any setup fees / miscellaneous costing (access fees / server fees)
 - d. Reverse-billed data costs for **user-to-user-chat services** – per MB and any setup fees / miscellaneous costing (access fees / server fees)
 - e. Reverse-billed data costs for **Chabot** services – per MB and any setup fees / miscellaneous costing (access fees / server fees)

6. Proposal evaluation criteria

Criteria and evidence for:	Points	Score*
<p>Portfolio of at least 5 prior engagements in applying Reverse-billed data technology to qualitative or quantitative research</p> <p>The supplier to furnish the HSRC with a list of 5 prior engagements – the name of the company, the project name and project duration.</p>	40	

<p>Scoring to work as follows: <i>No portfolio of prior engagements – 0 points; 1 prior engagement – 5 points; 2-4 prior engagements – 10 points; 5 prior engagements – 40 points</i></p>		
<p>Demonstrate the immediate availability of a dedicated online account management tool to access HSRC Reverse -billed data usage and statistics</p> <p>The supplier to furnish the HSRC with an accessible internet link to demonstrate the user account management system. This system should enable secure access to the HSRC user account and billing details.</p> <p>Scoring to work as follows: <i>No online portal – 0 points; accessible portal to manage HSRC account engagements – 15 points</i></p>	15	
<p>Portfolio of at least 5 prior digital collaborations on large-scale provision of Reverse-billed data services applications, surveys or websites</p> <p>The supplier to furnish the HSRC with a list of 5 prior digital collaborations (can be the same as in item 1) – however must have a national footprint across South Africa – the name of the company the work was completed for, the project name and project duration.</p> <p>Scoring to work as follows: <i>No portfolio of digital collaborations – 0 points; 1 prior digital collaboration– 5 points; 2-4 prior digital collaboration – 10 points; 5 prior digital collaboration – 15 points</i></p>	15	
<p>Portfolio 2 prior engagements in applying Reverse-billed data technology to qualitative remote interviews (using video conference technology on smartphones / tablets / desktops)</p> <p>The supplier to furnish the HSRC with a list of 2 prior digital collaborations (can be the same as in item 1) – however must have a provided reverse-billed data services to remove video conferencing or other qualitative research application – the name of the company the work was completed for, the project name and project duration.</p> <p>Scoring to work as follows: <i>No portfolio of RBDS to video / audio applications – 0 points; 1 prior engagement of RBDS to video / audio applications – 15 points; 2 prior engagements of RBDS to video / audio applications 30 points</i></p>	30	
Total	100	

Minimum evaluation threshold :70 %

Compulsory Briefing session to be held on 02 November 2021 @ 10:00am

Closing date of proposals: 09 November 2021 @ 16:00PM

Any service provider interested, please RSVP at the below contact details:

SCM COMPLIANCE & ENQUIRIES:

Tel: 012 302 2376

Email: bthwala@hsrc.ac.za / mmagoleng@hsrc.ac.za