

TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR)

APPOINTMENT OF A SUITABLE SERVICE PROVIDER TO DEVELOP GUIDELINES FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROVIDERS (SDPS) ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) FOR CREDIT AGAINST THE PSETA ACCREDITED PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION QUALIFICATIONS

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The PSETA is a statutory body established through the Skills Development Act of 1998. It is a schedule 3(a) listed public entity in terms of the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) (Act 1 of 1999 as amended) and is accountable to the National Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). PSETA conducts its activities within the following four sub-sectors:

- i) National Departments
- ii) Provincial Departments
- iii) Legislative Sub-sector
- iv) Public Entities

1.2. Within these sub-sectors, PSETA's responsibility is to:

- a) Develop a Sector Skills Plan (SSP) within the framework of the National Skills Development (NSDP);
- b) Implement the SSP;
- c) Support and administer Learning programmes;
- d) Conduct quality assurance on learning in line with Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) requirements;
- e) Disburse levies collected from levy paying employers in our sub-sectors in terms of the Skills Development Levies Act;
- f) Support the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF);
- g) Quality assure learning interventions;
- h) Report to the Minister of Higher Education and Training (HET) and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

1.3. The PSETA Sector Skills Plan (SSP) is a framework within which PSETA identifies key priorities and critical skills development trends, objectives, and priority areas, which provide for a sector profile and analysis of the demand for, and supply of skills in the Public Service sector.

2. BACKGROUND TO RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)

2.1. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is defined as “the principle through which the prior knowledge and skills of a person are made visible, mediated and assessed for the purpose of alternative access and admission, recognition and certification, or further learning and development” (SAQA, 2019). RPL is multi-dimensional – it is a process through which nonformal, informal and formal learning can be measured and mediated against learning outcomes for recognition across different contexts.

2.2. While there are essentially two legislated forms of RPL in South Africa, the following four forms are widely implemented:

- 2.2.1. **“RPL for Access”**: to provide an alternative access route into a programme of learning, professional designation, employment and career progression into learning, and
- 2.2.2. **“RPL for Credit”**: to provide for the awarding of credits for, or towards, a qualification or part-qualification registered on the NQF.
- 2.2.3. RPL has also been used for recognition in workplaces: for employment purposes which occurs in the workplace and for workplace purposes (e.g. **RPL for recruitment and selection**).
- 2.2.4. The context of the NQF requires that **Professional Bodies provide RPL** routes to their professional designations. SAQA's policy requires that the recognition of professional body be in alignment with the National Constitution (RSA, 1994) and the NQF, therefore professional bodies need to include an RPL route to their professional designations.

2.3. According to SAQA, the principle through which a person's prior knowledge and skills are made visible, mediated, and assessed for the purposes of alternative access and admission, recognition and certification, or further learning and development is referred to as the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in South African national policy.

- 2.4. Chapter 13 of the National Development Plan (NDP) supports the implementation of RPL process in the public service employment practices and recommends that the Public Service recruitment practices should focus not only on the people who already have the relevant experience and expertise today, but greater emphasis must also be placed on potential.
- 2.5. The White Paper for Post -School Education and Training states that Recognition of Prior Learning remains a key approach to redressing past injustices and recognising competence gained through practical workplace learning and experience.
- 2.6. The approach to the implementation of RPL in the Public Service is guided by and integrated into the Public Service Human Resource Development Strategic Framework, as it recognises RPL as one of a wide set of options to be adopted as an essential tool for capacity development to respond to the varying needs and requirements of the Public Service and to build the capacity of employees to undertake their responsibilities.
- 2.7. As part of its strategic priorities, the PSETA has prioritised the funding and implementation of RPL against the PSETA Public Administration qualifications across different NQF levels.
- 2.8. The funding of the implementation of RPL has been awarded to different SDPs who notably implement RPL assessments as guided by their respective internal institutional policies.
- 2.9. To date, PSETA has awarded six (6) XXX RPL projects to six (6) SDPs.
- 2.10. The PSETA acknowledges that RPL is conducted using a variety of specialised learning interventions and/or assessment approaches through which the knowledge, skills and values of a person are made visible, mediated, and assessed.

2.11. To this end the PSETA has noted the need for a standardised approach for conducting RPL for credit against the PSETA Public Administration qualifications within the context of the Public Service sector.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE ASSIGNMENT

3.1 The purpose of this project is to obtain the services of a suitable service provider to develop guidelines for Skills Development Providers (SDPs) on the implementation of RPL for credit against the PSETA accredited Public Administration qualifications.

3.2 This will assist PSETA accredited SDPs to conduct RPL assessments in a standardised manner that is determined and guided by the PSETA.

3.3 The main objectives of the study are to:

- a) Assess the existing RPL assessment tools utilised by the PSETA accredited SDPs who have implemented PSETA funded RPL programmes.
- b) Evaluate the alignment of the existing RPL assessment tools to the DPSA RPL policy directive.
- c) Evaluate the RPL evidence collection requirements adopted by SDPs conducting RPL for credit against the PSETA accredited Public Administration qualifications.
- d) Ascertain the best practices to be adopted when conducting RPL against PSETA accredited Public Administration qualifications.
- e) Align the PSETA RPL Guidelines for SDPs to the DPSA and SAQA RPL assessment mechanisms and processes.
- f) Compile PSETA RPL Implementation Guidelines to be utilised by PSETA accredited SDPs when conducting RPL assessments to award credits against the PSETA Public Administration qualifications.
- g) Capacitate PSETA staff on the implementation guidelines.

4. SCOPE OF WORK

The appointed service provider will be required to:

- 4.1 Conduct an in-depth policy and document analysis on the implementation of and implications of RPL in the Public Service sector.
- 4.2 Undertake an analysis and review of, but not limited to the following sources of data:
 - Public Service Act (1994) and Public Service Regulations (2016);
 - National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008 (Act 67 of 2008);
 - RPL Coordination Policy (Ministry of Higher Education and Training, 2016);
 - Level Descriptors for the South African National Qualifications Framework (SAQA,2012) (and any subsequent amendments);
 - Public Service Human Resource Development Strategic Framework; and
 - National Policy and Criteria for the Implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning (as amended in 2019);
 - DPSA Directive on Policy Guidelines and Procedure for the Implementation of RPL in the public service;
- 4.4. Provide an assessment of whether the RPL assessment tools for SDPs are clearly aligned to the national policy and criteria;
- 4.5. A brief assessment of the relevance and or strengths/weaknesses of the PSETA RPL moderation/verification tools and processes;
- 4.6. The identification of gaps between the SDP RPL assessment tool and their impact and close such gaps by developing a fit for purpose guideline document to be utilised by SDPs to implement RPL on behalf of the PSETA.

4.7. The following stakeholders will be at the centre of this study:

- SDPs that have been awarded PSETA discretionary grants to implement its RPL for credit against the Public Administration qualifications at various NQF levels.
- SDFs from the respective (sampled) departments that have benefited from the PSETA funded RPL projects at different NQF levels.

4.8. Research design and methodology

4.8.1. It is expected that the study will include both qualitative and quantitative research approaches including the following:

- Development of research tools and instruments (e.g. questionnaires and/or interview schedules).
- Conduct interviews and/or focus group sessions with the beneficiaries and relevant the PSETA stakeholders.
- Document analysis, public service sector legislation and other relevant sources of data resulting in a literature review.
- Primary and secondary sources of data that may provide insight into the RPL study outcomes.

4.8.2. The identification of the relevant key role-players for this study will be done in consultation with the PSETA and the successful service provider.

4.8.3. Research Questions

The key evaluation questions to be answered in this study are:

- To what extent have the PSETA accredited SDPs aligned their RPL assessment tools to the SAQA national policy and criteria for implementing RPL?
- To what extent has the PSETA have SDPs aligned their RPL assessment tools to the DPSA Directive on Policy Guidelines and Procedure for the Implementation of RPL in the public service?

- To what extent have the PSETA accredited SDPs applied the assessment principles as outlined in the National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment for NQF Qualifications and Part-Qualifications and Professional Designations in South Africa?
- How do SDPs advise, guide and support RPL candidates to fill gaps where the RPL assessment shows gaps in the candidates' knowledge and skills?
- What key lessons, insights and recommendations can be learnt from this study?
- What are the guidelines that can be developed for SDPs to implement RPL for credit against PSETA accredited Public Administration qualifications?

5. DELIVERABLES

This study is expected to provide the following deliverables:

- 5.1. An Inception Report following discussions with the PSETA on the interpretation of the scope of the study;
- 5.2. All data collection instruments and tools for sign off;
- 5.3. A draft report for review;
- 5.4. All process reports including background reports on the research methods employed as well as document analysis;
- 5.5. PowerPoint presentations of the reports on predetermined intervals;
- 5.6. To present the findings and recommendations of the RPL study at the PSETA strategy sessions, governance structure sessions, meetings and/or any other relevant for a as identified by the PSETA;
- 5.7. All completed transcripts, field work reports, datasets, meta data analysis plans, etc.;
- 5.8. Final RPL implementation guidelines and report in hard copy and electronic formats.
- 5.9. A close-out report in hard copy and electronic formats.

6. COMPETENCIES AND SKILLS SET REQUIRED

The following competencies are expected:

- 6.1. Strong understanding and knowledge of the Post-School Education and Training sector, Recognition of Prior Learning and the skills development landscape in the public service sector;
- 6.2. Solid understanding of the PSETA operating environment and the PSETA sub-sectors;
- 6.3. Ability to lead and manage a project of this nature;
- 6.4. Expert knowledge and understanding of research methodologies and solid experience in the application thereof. This would be required in relation to:
 - i. Applied Research;
 - ii. Quantitative and Qualitative Research;
 - iii. Longitudinal and/ or Panel Studies;
 - iv. Conducting of research synthesis e.g. systematic reviews;
 - v. Policy analysis.
- 6.5. Ability to systematically gather, analyse, synthesise relevant evidence and data from a range of sources, identify relevant materials and assess its quality and identify gaps;
- 6.6. Ability to identify ethical issues relating to research, including potential or actual conflict of interest, protecting confidentiality/ anonymity, and obtaining informed consent from research participants;
- 6.7. Cultural competence - the ability to deal effectively with the different stakeholders involved in the research study especially appropriate language skills;
- 6.8. Ability to write concise and focused report that are credible, useful and actionable, address key research questions and show the evidence, analysis, synthesis and recommendations;
- 6.9. Demonstrate strong project management skills, including field coordination and implementation where necessary;

6.10. Strong management of resources to deliver high quality research and results on time and to appropriate standards;

6.11. Strong, capable and efficient project team as evidenced by the submission of a detailed organogram indicating the roles and responsibilities of the proposed project team.

7. STRUCTURE OF PROPOSAL

7.1. The service provider must provide the following.

7.1.1. Understanding of the research study and the terms of reference (background to the study, rationale, purpose, objectives);

7.1.2. Approach, design and methodology for the research study (e.g. literature and documentation review, a proposed sample of data collection tools, sample, suggestions for elaboration or changes to scope and methodology as outlined in the TOR, examples of research questions suggested, process elements);

7.1.3. Activity-based plan (including number of person days per activity and time frame linked to activities); Activity-based budget (in South African Rand, including VAT);

7.1.4. Competence (include list of related projects undertaken and contactable references);

7.1.5. Team organogram (team members, roles and level of effort of each person involved in the project);

7.1.6. Quality management plan (demonstrate ability to quality assure research process in the methodology to ensure a high quality product and service);

7.1.7. Research policy nexus (indicate how the research findings can be engaged with to promote utilisation by PSETA and the sector);

7.1.8. Schedule of reporting frequency/intervals according to identified outputs.

7.1.9. Risks/mitigation measures.

7.1.10. The following attachments:

- i. References for related research undertaken by the service providers; and
- ii. CVs of key members of the proposed project team
- iii. Certified copies of qualifications of key members of the proposed project team.

8. QUALITY ASSURANCE PLAN

- 8.1. The purpose of this Quality Assurance Plan for research is to set forth the principles for good research practices, which will in turn be used to institutionalise quality assurance processes through the routine management of research reports.
- 8.2. The provider must attach a clear Quality Assurance Plan for research projects. The PSETA is responsible for monitoring progress, research quality and maintaining regular communications with the external researchers.
- 8.3. Monitoring progress and regular communication with Project Manager will ensure the quality of implementation.
- 8.4. The optimal frequency of communication will vary depending on the study or the phase of the study, but at minimum a monthly check-in is required throughout the project period.
- 8.5. A progress report will be required and scheduled according to the total duration of the project. The progress report will be evaluated with a focus on whether the research is progressing according to plan, noting any actual or anticipated changes to the plan, and whether there have been any new developments in the field that impacts the research design or relevance.
- 8.6. The draft final report should be submitted to the Project Steering Committee, which will be reviewed and commented on. After approval by the Project Steering Committee, the service provider will incorporate the approved comments and changes into the report before the final report can be adopted and submitted.
- 8.7. The above reporting requirement should be factored into the QA planning of the assignment.

9. TIME FRAME

- 9.1. The assignment will take approximately six months from the date of appointment with the expected deadline for closure of project in September 2023. Detailed timelines will be shared with the successful service provider.

10. COMPETENCIES OF PROSPECTIVE SERVICE PROVIDER

10.1. The bidder must meet the following for eligibility:

10.1.1. Provide a detailed research proposal and project plan.

10.1.2. Must have at least 5-10 years of work experience with regard to Applied Research; Quantitative and Qualitative Research; Longitudinal and/ or Panel Studies; Conducting of research synthesis e.g. systematic reviews; Policy analysis, South African public service sector education and training policies and strategies, the PSET landscape.

10.2. In addition, the proposal must indicate:

10.2.1. The service provider's area of expertise and experience;

10.2.2. Extensive experience in undertaking large scale research projects in skills development, education and training in the public service sector;

10.2.3. Itemised project budget with justification for amounts;

10.2.4. Provide signed reference letters from contactable references demonstrating experience and work done over the past five years in similar projects;

10.2.5. Demonstrate understanding of the relevant skills development and related legislation, including the Skills Development Act, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act, National Policy for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), the Recognition of Prior Learning Coordination Policy, the White Paper on Post School Education and Training, the National Development Plan 2030, the National Skills Development Plan 2030 and other relevant sector specific legislation;

10.2.6. Sufficient capacity and an appropriately skilled team to carry out parallel activities and to undertake and complete projects by the required dates;

10.2.7. Access to resources and infrastructure arrangements (service provider's organisational structure, systems, local and international networks etc.).

11. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- 11.1. The project manager of the appointed service provider will report to the Skills Planning and Research Manager of PSETA.
- 11.2. The project will be regularly monitored at determined intervals according to identified outputs.
- 11.3. The selected service provider shall be required to submit an inception report on the assignment to the Project Steering Committee two weeks after the commencement of the assignment. The Inception Report must include detailed work methodologies, a work plan and assigned responsibilities, budget, study outputs and deliverables, and outline structure of the Research Study.
- 11.4. The draft final report should be submitted to the Project Steering Committee, which will be reviewed and commented on by the limited selected number of stakeholders. After approval by the Project Steering Committee:
 - The service provider will incorporate the approved comments and changes into the report before the final report can be adopted and submitted.
 - The above reporting requirement should be factored into the planning of the assignment.
- 11.5. Payment will only take place after the requirements for specific deliverables have been met.
- 11.6. Written progress reports at determined intervals according to identified outputs will be delivered in the agreed format and/or as when required.
- 11.7. The details of identified risks and mitigation plans to be included in the proposal.
- 11.8. Feedback meetings will be arranged as and when necessary, through the project manager.
- 11.9. No changes to the project will be effected, unless prior discussion and approval by PSETA

12. COPYRIGHT

All the information derived from this assignment will remain the property of PSETA. This includes data gathering tools, raw data, and all reports. Publication of any information emanating from this research study is prohibited unless permission to cite the findings is approved by the PSETA.

13. SUBMISSION OF THE PROPOSAL

The service provider should prepare an offer/proposal on how the assignment will be undertaken, a clear work plan, budget, and curriculum vitae of the expert(s). The proposal must be concise and straight to the point adhering to the timeframe defined under Section 9.

14. AVAILABLE DATA/INFORMATION TO THE POTENTIAL SUPPLIER RELEVANT TO THIS BID

The PSETA Sector Skills Plan, Annual Performance Plan, and Annual Report are available on the PSETA website. www.pseta.org.za.

15. PROPOSAL EVALUATION AND APPOINTMENT OF SERVICE PROVIDER

The evaluation will be based on

Phase 1: Functionality Evaluation	
Phase 2: Preferential Point System	Points
Price	80
Special goals	20
Black owned company	8
Women	4
Youth	5
Disability	3
Total	100

PHASE 1 – FUNCTIONALITY EVALUATION

Bids must meet the minimum eligibility criteria in respect of functionality of 75 points out of 100 points that will be awarded for functionality before they are considered further. Any bid that does not meet the minimum eligibility threshold will be automatically disqualified. The functionality criteria together with the maximum points to be awarded are set out below.

16. EVALUATION PROCESS AND CRITERIA.

The bids will be evaluated on the 80/20 principle with 80 points being allocated for price and 20 points allocated for Special goals, once the minimum functionality criteria are met. The evaluation will be based on:

Domain	Evaluation Method	Criteria	Weight	Score
1. Proposal and Project Plan:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal with Project plan displaying an understanding and knowledge of conducting and managing research studies. Detailed In-depth project plan detailing timeframes for the project, activity-based plan, detailed activity-based budget and quality assurance plan. 	NB: All proposals must cover sections outlined in section 7. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 = Proposal and project plan not acceptable (all areas not covered). 2 = Poorly written proposal and a project plan (few areas covered) 3 = Average proposal (most areas covered) 4 = Good proposal (all areas covered but not in depth) 5 = Excellent detailed proposal (all areas thoroughly addressed in depth) 	25	1
				2
				3
				4
				5

Domain	Evaluation Method	Criteria	Weight	Score
2. Knowledge and experience of Project Manager	<p>The Project manager must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have an appropriate academic qualification/s and at least 5-10 years of work experience with regard to Applied Research; Quantitative and Qualitative Research; Longitudinal and/ or Panel Studies; Conducting of research synthesis e.g. systematic reviews; Policy analysis, recognition of prior learning, the South African public service sector education and training policies and strategies, the PSET landscape. Attach a CV and certified copies of qualifications. Proof of SAQA evaluation must be provided in the case of foreign qualifications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1= No submission of CV and/ or certified copies of qualifications 2= CV, Certified copies of qualifications and less than 5years experience 3 = CV, Certified copies of qualifications and a minimum of 5 years' experience. 4 = CV, Certified copies of qualifications and a minimum of 6 to 9 years' experience. 5 = CV, Certified copies of qualifications and 10 years and above experience. 	25	1
				2
				3
				4
				5
	Extent to which the design concept reflects the objectives noted in this bid.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 = No Methodology or Methodology not covering all areas of Section 7. 	25	1

Domain	Evaluation Method	Criteria	Weight	Score
3. Project design and Approach/Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collection methods, sources of information/documentation, research sources and literature clearly indicated and relevant to the scope of work. Use of knowledge base of the relevant skills development and related legislation, including the Skills Development Act, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act, National Policy for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), the Recognition of Prior Learning Coordination Policy, the White Paper on Post School Education and Training, the National Development Plan 2030, the National Skills Development Plan 2030 and other relevant sector specific legislation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 = Methodology covering few areas of Section 7. 3 = Methodology covering most areas of Section 7. 4 = Methodology covering all areas of section 7. but not in depth. 5= Excellent detailed methodology with all areas thoroughly addressing Section 7. 		2
				3
				4
				5

Domain	Evaluation Method	Criteria	Weight	Score
4. Writing and Communication	<p>Provide at least 3 sample research study reports of previous work produced in similar or/and related projects. <i>Project Manager/Team Leader should have been involved in the drafting of the report</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must write clear, concise and focused reports that are credible, useful and actionable, address the key questions, and show the evidence, analysis, synthesis, recommendations and evaluative interpretation and how these build from each other. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1= No research study reports provided of similar work undertaken previously. 2 = Research reports provided not in areas of similar work. 3 = 1 sample research report of previous work in similar project provided. 4 = 2 sample research reports of previous work in similar project(s) provided. 5 = 3 sample research reports of previous work in similar project(s) provided. 	10	1
				2
				3
				4
				5

Domain	Evaluation Method	Criteria	Weight	Score
5. References Traceable references of clients where projects of similar nature were conducted.	Reference letters as evidence of previous research studies conducted. (NB: <i>The Reference Letter(s) must be in the letterhead of the previously serviced organisation and should reflect at least name of the organisation, title of the study, year conducted, year completed, contactable reference name and contact details</i>) Reference letters must be on a letterhead, signed by the CEO/Head and dated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 = No reference letter provided of work previously done. • 2 = 1 to 2 reference letters of research work previously done • 3 = 3 reference letters of work previously done • 4 = 4 reference letters of work previously done. • 5 = 5 or more reference letters work previously done. 	15	1
				2
				3
				4
				5
Total			100	

17. FORMAT OF THE BID SUBMISSION

- 17.1. Company profile indicating all the requirements as per the evaluation criteria
- 17.2. Methodology and Approach (detailed project plan)
- 17.3. Team member names and roles
- 17.4. CV and certified copies of qualifications
- 17.5. Track record and experience
- 17.6. Submission of all applicable documents as indicated below:
 - Certified copy of doctor's certification with medical practice number.
 - Certified copies of the director's ID's document.
 - Valid Tax compliance status (TCS) PIN or proof of exemption from SARS;
 - Copy of the registration document of the organisation (CIPC);
 - Copy of the Central Supplier Database registration.

18.COSTING

- 18.1. A cost analysis must be given to cover the full project amount. The proposed project pricing must be all-inclusive (i.e. including professional fees, venue hire, travel expenses, disbursements and VAT). The PSETA may require a breakdown of rates on any of the items priced and service providers are required to provide same. Incidental costs shall be in line with the National Treasury Instruction Note 1 of 2013/14. Expenditure incurred without the prior approval of the organisation will not be reimbursed. PSETA reserves the right to negotiate the selection/prioritisation of deliverables in line with the contract price.
- 18.2. The budget should indicate clearly all the cost elements which will be involved. All prices should be quoted in South African Rands (ZAR).

19. IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR BIDDERS

19.1. Proposals must be submitted electronic, the requestion (RFQ) number must be indicated on the line subject.

19.2. A valid Tax compliance status (TCS) PIN or proof of exemption from SARS.

19.3. All Standard Bidding documents (SBD) documents must be completed and signed.

- SBD 4
- SBD 6.1
- Proof of registration on Central Supplier Database.

NB: Please note that failure to submit documents requested on section 19 (19.3) will render the proposal disqualified.

Bid applications must be submitted to:

Ms Lungile Mokoena

email on lungilem@pseta.org.za or SCM@pseta.org.za

Please direct all queries to **Ms Lungile Mokoena** via email on lungilem@pseta.org.za

