

HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

Request For Proposals

BID DESCRIPTION:

APPOINTMENT OF A SERVICE PROVIDER(S) FOR QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION ON THE SAPRS SUB-STUDY ON SCIENTISTS AND RESEARCHERS

CLOSING DATE FOR SUBMISSION: **15 October 2026**

1. BACKGROUND

The Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI) is the policy custodian of South Africa's science engagement programme, which seeks to promote a society that is knowledgeable, able to form independent opinions on science issues, and scientifically literate. The science engagement programme derives its mandate from the 2019 White Paper on Science, Technology and Innovation, and is guided by the Science Engagement Strategy (2015) and its associated Implementation Plan (2017). To monitor the impact of these policies, the DSTI commissioned the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) to conduct the first *South African Public Relationship with Science Survey* (SAPRS) in 2022, to be repeated every five years.

While the SAPRS Survey provides comprehensive data on the general public's relationship with science, it captures only one side of the science-society relationship. The HSRC has designed a research project to capture the complementary perspective from Scientists and Researchers themselves. Understanding scientists' and researchers own relationship with science (knowledge, attitudes and engagement behaviours) is essential for promoting key policy ambitions.

The study's primary objective is to establish a representative measure of scientists' and researchers' S&T knowledge, attitudes (promise, reservation, trust), and science engagement behaviours, enabling direct comparison with the SAPRS 2022 public baseline. A quantitative research design will be employed, using a structured online survey adapted from the SAPRS instrument. The target population comprises scientists and researchers working at public universities, science councils and research institutions. A multi-channel dissemination and survey popularisation strategy will be used in partnerships with important science sector stakeholders to maximise the survey reach and encourage participation.

The data collection will form part of a hybrid data collection strategy, where 60% of data will be collected by fieldworkers on-site, while 40% will be collected via an online self-completion strategy. Data collection will

run over a four-month period from November 2026 to February 2027 to accommodate the demands on researchers' time and enable comprehensive reach across the target population.

2. SCOPE OF WORK

The HSRC is looking for a service provider to demonstrate how they will undertake the following:

2.1 Key areas of Delivery

- a) The appointed service provider will be responsible for conducting data collection using an online based survey instrument, yielding a minimum of **220 fully completed questionnaires**¹.
- b) Data collection period **9 November 2026 – 12 February 2027**
- c) Details of **fieldwork locations** and the **number of completed questionnaires** are provided below:

University	Province	Completed surveys required (160)
University of the Witwatersrand	Gauteng	30
University of Pretoria	Gauteng	20
University of Johannesburg	Gauteng	20
University of South Africa	Gauteng	20
University of KwaZulu-Natal	KwaZulu-Natal	20
North-West University	North-West Province	20
University of Stellenbosch	Western Cape	10
University of Cape Town	Western Cape	10
University of the Western Cape	Western Cape	10
Science Councils and Research Institutions	Province	Completed surveys required (60)
Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)	GP - KZN - WC	20
National Research Foundation (NRF)	Gauteng	10
South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC)	Western Cape	10
South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI)	Western Cape	10
Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)	GP - KZN - WC	10

2.2 Recruit and Supervise

- a) Recruit qualified, trained and experienced **quantitative data collectors (based in the province of work)** to carry out fieldwork at University and Science Council campuses in the Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, the North-West, and Western Cape Provinces during the research period (November 2026 and February 2027).
- b) Data collectors must be **experienced in quantitative data collection** using internet-connected digital tablets to access the online survey platform. This will include the procedural and ethical understanding of data collection for survey data. The HSRC will provide a fieldworker briefing session, but no additional training on these aspects.
- c) Considering the sample of Scientists and Researchers, the survey will be in English, data collectors however, must be able to **engage in English and the local languages** spoken in each of the four provincial areas where the data will be collected (a table is provided below for ease of reference)

¹ A *fully completed* questionnaire captures data on a non-refusing participant, where every item in the questionnaire has a valid response captured, and provides usable data for analysis. To achieve 220 fully completed questionnaire, a degree of oversampling may be required by data collectors to buffer against non-response, drop-outs, and failed quality checks.

Province	Language
Gauteng	English as well as isiZulu, Sesotho, Sepedi
KwaZulu-Natal	English as well as isiZulu
North-West	English as well as Setswana and Sesotho
Western Cape	English as well as isiXhosa and Afrikaans

- d) **Assign one Provincial Coordinator** to oversee fieldwork and provide ongoing supervision and support to the data collection team throughout the fieldwork period, addressing any operational or technical challenges that arise.
- e) **Maintain clear communication channels** between the research team, the HSRC project lead, and stakeholder organisations to ensure coordinated, ethical and efficient data collection process.

2.3 Key responsibilities of Quantitative Researchers:

- a) **Administer the structured online survey** to consenting scientists and researchers across participating institutions.
- b) **Monitor survey response rates** and implement targeted follow-up communications.
- c) **Maintain accurate records** of survey distribution, responses received, and non-responses.
- d) **Ensure that all data collected is complete**, accurate, and securely captured to online system.
- e) **Engage with institutional communication teams** and project champions to facilitate responses.

2.4 Key responsibilities of Data Collection Company Overseeing Researchers:

- a) Serve as the **primary point of contact** between the HSRC project lead and the data collector.
- b) Develop and implement a detailed **fieldwork plan, timelines, and response rate targets**.
- c) **Oversee the day-to-day management** of the data collectors' team.
- d) Ensure that all data collectors adhere to the **approved data collection protocols and standards**.
- e) **Supply and ensure all data collectors are adequately equipped** with an internet connected digital tablet to enable them to connect to the HSRC REDCap survey platform (HSRC will develop and maintain the platform).
- f) **Troubleshoot any technical issues** that may arise.
- g) **Ensure secure data handling** in compliance with the appropriate legislation.
- h) **Delete and destroy all non-digital data records generated during fieldwork**.
- i) Prepare a comprehensive fieldwork report detailing all data collection activities, challenges encountered, mitigation strategies implemented, and lessons learned (by March 2027).

2.5 Overall quality control

- a) **Implement systematic quality control procedures**.
- b) **Establish and maintain quality assurance documentation**.
- c) **Conduct periodic quality audits** to ensure that all research activities comply with protocols.
- d) Ensure that all **weekly data collection plans** are submitted.

2.6 Safety, Conduct, and Operational Responsibilities

- a) **Safety:** While this research will take place on secure university and Science Council campuses, considered private property, Bidders should always take precautions to ensure data collectors safety. They should provide safe, roadworthy, and presentable transport, reasonable financial allowances to ensure work is completed, and a market-related salary. Report safety incidents or accidents to the HSRC and police immediately.
- b) **Safety guidelines:** Provide risk management guidelines to ensure staff safety and protect data collection equipment. Ensure that data collectors have ID badges, wear their branded bibs, T-shirts / caps, and identify to legitimise the study.
- c) The successful **Service Provider must ensure that the data collectors do not use any substances**, including drugs or alcohol, while working on this HSRC project.
- d) **Be available on a cell phone** during data collection to promptly address logistical issues.
- e) **Respond to any queries** that arise regarding the completed questionnaires.
- f) **Ensure robust data management, security and protection** across all stages.
- g) Ensure that all research team members adhere to the **highest ethical standards**, including respect for participant confidentiality, informed consent, and voluntary participation.
- h) **Comply with all applicable South African legislation**, including the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), in the handling and storage of participant data and personal information.
- i) **Maintain professional conduct at all times** when engaging with participants, institutional representatives, and stakeholder organisations, representing the HSRC and the study with integrity.
- j) Ensure that all **fieldwork activities are conducted in a safe and secure manner**, with appropriate protocols in place.
- k) **Adhere to institutional access protocols** when engaging with universities, science councils, and other research institutions.

3. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE HSRC

The HSRC will:

- a) Provide the **Research Protocol, Fieldwork Manual**, and obtain **Permission Letters** from participating institutions.
- b) **Provide the service provider with the finalised survey instrument**, including an access link to the data capture page of the online survey system.
- c) Provide **support to field teams** where required, via the appointed provincial coordinator
- d) Provide **technical support and maintain the online survey system**
- e) **Conduct oversight** visits in the field.
- f) Set up a **data storage platform for limited shared access**.
- g) **Develop and provide popularisation materials**, including survey information sheets, consent forms, and promotional content, for use by the service provider in encouraging participation.
- h) **Secure institutional endorsements** and stakeholder partnerships and facilitate introductions to enable coordinated survey dissemination.
- i) **Assume responsibility for intellectual property and data ownership**, with the service provider acting solely as a data collection agent for the study.

4. DELIVERABLES

The expected deliverables from the Service Provider include the following:

Table 1: Activities to be covered by the successful bidder/s

Tasks	Deliverables/Outputs
2.1 Recruit and Supervise	
Recruit qualified, trained and experienced locally based quantitative data collectors in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, North-West, and Western Cape Provinces	List of recruited data collectors with qualifications and experience
Ensure data collectors are experienced in quantitative data collection using internet-connected digital tablets	Team of trained and equipped data collectors with access to internet enabled tablets ready for data collection
Assign one Provincial Coordinator to oversee field work in each province	Provincial Coordinator appointment and contact details
Provide ongoing supervision and support to data collector teams throughout fieldwork period	Supervision logs and issue resolution records
Maintain clear communication channels between research team, HSRC project lead, and stakeholder organisations	Communication protocols and contact register established
2.2 Key Responsibilities of Quantitative Researchers	
Administer structured online survey to willing scientists and researchers	Completed survey responses captured on REDCap platform
Monitor survey response rates and implement targeted follow-up communications	Response rate tracking records and follow-up communication logs
Maintain accurate records of survey distribution, responses, and non-responses	Distribution logs and progress tracking records
Ensure data is complete, accurate, and securely captured, flagging anomalies	Quality assured data entries
Engage with institutional communication teams and project champions	Institutional engagement records and champion correspondence

2.3 Key Responsibilities of Data Collection Company Overseeing Researchers	
Serve as primary point of contact between HSRC project lead and data collectors	Designated project manager assigned and communication protocols established
Develop and implement detailed fieldwork plan with timelines and response rate targets	Approved Fieldwork Plan submitted to HSRC
Oversee day-to-day management of data collector teams	Management records and performance monitoring documentation
Ensure all data collectors adhere to approved protocols and ethical standards	Compliance audit records
Equip all data collectors with internet-connected digital tablets	Hardware inventory and functionality verification
Troubleshoot technical issues during data collection	Technical issue resolution logs
Monitor response rates and implement targeted intervention strategies	Response rate monitoring reports and intervention records
Maintain comprehensive fieldwork documentation including progress reports, issue logs, and quality assurance records	Weekly progress reports and issue logs submitted to HSRC
Coordinate with HSRC and partner organisations for site access and data collection	Coordination meeting records and access agreements
Ensure secure data handling in compliance with POPIA	Data protection compliance documentation
Delete all data collected upon confirmation of secure HSRC backup	Data destruction confirmation
Prepare comprehensive fieldwork report detailing activities, challenges, and lessons learned	Final Fieldwork Report submitted (March 2027)
2.4 Overall Quality Control	
Implement systematic quality control procedures for data accuracy and completeness	Quality control protocols and checklists
Establish and maintain quality assurance documentation	Data collection logs, progress trackers, and issue registers
Conduct periodic quality audits for protocol compliance	Audit reports and corrective action records

Ensure daily data upload and weekly progress reporting	Daily upload verification records and weekly progress Reports
2.5 Additional Expectations of the Service Provider	
Provide regular progress reports to HSRC project lead	Weekly progress reports detailing response rates, challenges, and mitigation
Collaborate effectively with partner organisations	Stakeholder collaboration records and meeting minutes
Supply and maintain data collection hardware	Functional tablets provided to all data collectors
Prepare comprehensive fieldwork reports	Final Fieldwork Report for inclusion in research report
2.6 Safety, Conduct, and Operational Responsibilities	
Ensure data collector safety with safe transport, reasonable allowances, and market-related salaries	Safety protocols and staff welfare documentation
Provide risk management guidelines for staff safety and equipment protection	Risk Management Plan
Ensure field staff have ID badges for study identification (professional appearance)	Staff identification and documentation
Ensure fieldworkers do not use substances (drugs or alcohol) during fieldwork	Substance-free workplace compliance records
Be available on cell phone to address logistical issues	Ensure contact availability
Respond to queries regarding completed questionnaires	Query resolution records
Ensure robust data management	Data Management and Security Plan
Ensure adherence to highest ethical standards	Ethics compliance documentation
Professional conduct with participants and institutions	Professional conduct records
Ensure activities are conducted safely and securely	Safety and security protocols
Adhere to institutional access protocols	Institutional access documentation

5. MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

- 1) A company profile that includes your company's history, vision, mission, location, infrastructure and staff profiles with a minimum of 5 years of data collection experience.
- 2) The service provider must have access to a pool of experienced quantitative researchers and share a list of these researchers who meet the study recruitment strategy in terms of location, experience and language proficiency as per the above specification in line with the province(s) the service provider will be working in.
- 3) The service provider must have a proven track record (reports) demonstrated by three examples of having conducted similar work within these provinces relevant to this study (especially at universities and science councils).
- 4) A detailed project execution plan, including timelines and a comprehensive budget, must be submitted.
- 5) The service provider must provide a list of references with contactable referees on a signed company letterhead, attached to the bid documentation regarding similar work completed within the last five years.

6. TIMELINES

The successful service provider is expected to complete the assignment between **9 November 2026** and **12 February 2027** – equating to 95 calendar days or 69 working days from the date on which the Agreement is signed by both parties.

Requisition advertised to potential service providers:

A briefing session will be held online via Teams on 5 October 2026 @ 10:00 am.

Closing date of the proposal: 15 October 2026

7. CONTACT PERSON

Dr Saahier Parker: SParker@hsr.ac.za Mobile: 021 466 7814 or 082 928 7473

8. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following criteria will be applied: **80/20 Preference Point System (80: Price; 20: Specific Goals)**

Minimum threshold: 75

Criterion	Weight
1. Experience Provided a company profile document which details a minimum of 5 years experience in quantitative survey research (15): 10 years and above (15 points) 6-9 years (10 points) 5 years (5 points) - Less than 5 years (0 points) Criteria: Demonstrated experience in conducting quantitative surveys among academic and research populations, including university staff and scientists. Proven track record in digital / online survey administration and digital data collection using platforms such as REDCap, or similar systems on handheld tablets. Experience in managing multi-province fieldwork operations simultaneously across South Africa, including Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, North-West, and Western Cape.	15
2. References Provide a list of contactable references from organisations for which similar quantitative data collection work was conducted within the last five years (15): - Provided three (3) or more references verifiable and positive (15 points) - Provided two references verifiable and positive (10 points) - Provided one reference verifiable and positive (5 points) - Not provided or not verifiable - (0 points) Criteria: References to include academic institutions or research councils for whom the bidder has conducted quantitative survey data collection. References that can confirm the bidder's ability to achieve survey targets within fieldwork timelines. References that confirm the bidder's compliance with ethical standards and data protection protocols.	15

3. Project Execution Plan Submit a detailed Project Execution Plan outlining the methodology for the survey data collection, training plan, and proposed fieldwork activities (30): • Comprehensive and well-structured plan with clear timelines, risk mitigation, and resource allocation (21-30 points) • Adequate plan with some detail but gaps in risk mitigation or timelines (11-20 points) • Basic plan lacking sufficient detail or demonstrating poor understanding of the study requirements (1-10 points) • Not provided- Poor (0 points) Criteria: Demonstrated understanding of the study objectives, target population, and the specific challenges of surveying scientists and researchers across multiple provinces. Clear and realistic fieldwork timeline with detailed activity scheduling, response rate targets, and escalation protocols for addressing challenges. Detailed stakeholder engagement strategy that outlines how the bidder will coordinate with institutional communication teams, and partner organisations to facilitate access and encourage participation.	30
4. Experience of Quantitative Researchers Provide list of data collectors per province indicating a provincial team leader and information of previous project experience for team leaders deployed on the project (25): • Team leaders with 3+ years of relevant experience (25 points) • Team leaders with 2 years of experience (17 points) • Team leaders with 1 year of experience (9 points) • Team leaders with less than 1 year working experience - Poor (0 points) Criteria: Teams with demonstrated experience managing quantitative fieldwork teams doing fieldwork at research institutions, universities, or science councils. Field researchers with proven experience in administering structured surveys to academic and professional populations, including experience with digital data collection methods. Demonstrated ability of the proposed team to operate effectively in multilingual settings, with language proficiency in English and local languages relevant to the fieldwork provinces. Evidence of the team's experience with ethical data collection procedures, including informed consent processes and confidentiality protocols.	25
5. Data Management Plan Submit a separate Data Management Plan detailing how data will be collected, and (where appropriate) deleted (15): • Comprehensive plan with detailed protocols, compliance, and security measures (11-15 points) • Adequate plan covering basic data management requirements but lacking detail on security or compliance (6-10 points)	15

• Basic plan with significant gaps in security or compliance protocols (1-5 points) • No data management plan- Poor (0) Criteria: Clear protocols for secure data capture to the HSRC Online data capture systems, including the management and provision of internet connected devices for <i>always on</i> mobile access on tablets. Demonstrated understanding of and compliance with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), including detailed protocols for participant data protection. Specific procedures for verifying data quality, including logical consistency checks, missing data protocols, and anomaly flagging. Clear data deletion protocols confirming that all collected data will be permanently deleted upon confirmation of secure HSRC backup (where appropriate). Evidence of robust data security measures, including encryption, access controls, and equipment theft prevention strategies.	
TOTAL	100