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**TERMS OF REFERENCE
FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF
A PANEL OF SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES AS RESEARCH
PARTNERS
TO CONDUCT STRATEGIC LABOUR MARKET RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
IN THE CATHSSETA SECTOR**

BID NUMBER:

Publication date	
Briefing Session	N/A
Closing date	
Envisaged Evaluation/Adjudication date	
Envisaged Appointment and Award date	
Project Start Date	01 April 2026
Validity period	Four (4) financial years (2026/27 to 2029/30)

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1. BACKGROUND TO CATHSSETA

- 1.1. The Skills Development Act No. 97 of 1998 as amended (SDA), makes provision for the establishment of Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) for each economic sector and thereby aims to develop the skills of the South African workforce by increasing the investment in education and training in the labour market; and encouraging employers to play a meaningful role in developing employees, particularly the previously disadvantaged.
- 1.2. The Culture, Arts, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Sector Education and Training Authority (CATHSSETA) was established in accordance with the SDA, to research and establish a nationally recognised Sector Skills Plan (SSP) supported by skills development programmes serving the interests of the following sub-sectors:
 - 1.2.1 Arts, Culture and Heritage;
 - 1.2.2 Conservation;
 - 1.2.3 Gaming and Lotteries;
 - 1.2.4 Hospitality;
 - 1.2.5 Sport, Recreation and Fitness; and
 - 1.2.6 Tourism and Travel Services
- 1.3. The CATHSSETA plays a pivotal role in skills development, training, and research across its six (6) sub-sectors.
- 1.4. These sectors are diverse and unique, and they play a significant role not only in the economy but also in the broader quest for social cohesion and the formulation of a unique South African national identity.

- 1.5. Research is a fundamental component of CATHSSETA's mandate, providing essential evidence to inform decision-making, policy review, and strategy formulation within the SETA.
- 1.6. For the CATHSSETA to respond to the National Skills Development Plan, 2030 (NSDP) objectives, there is a need to appoint Research Partners that will ensure delivery of high-quality research and evaluation reports, SSPs, research papers and strategic plan facilitation.
- 1.7. The Research Partners will operate for a period of four (4) financial years from 2026/2027 to 2029/2030.
- 1.8. It is against this backdrop that Research Partners should be appointed to ensure that quality work is delivered from an array of disciplines within the CATHSSETA sub-sectors, in the fields of innovation and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), as well as Monitoring and Evaluation.

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1. CATHSSETA's research mandate focuses on producing authoritative, sector-specific research and skills intelligence to support growth and development;
- 2.2. The research projects are instrumental in informing the SSP, which enables the SETA to produce credible strategic documents, namely, the Strategic Plan (SP) and Annual Performance Plan (APP), which ultimately inform the relevant and requisite skills development within the CATHSSETA sub-sectors;
- 2.3. To strengthen this mandate, CATHSSETA recognises the need to enhance its research capacity through the establishment of Research Partners;
 - 2.3.1. In response to the NSDP, there is a need to understand the demand for skills required by the sector;

- 2.3.2. For CATHSSETA, Research Partners represent strategic partnerships between SETAs and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), designed to build research capacity and expertise in priority areas, generate high-quality research outputs that inform sector development and strengthen the connection between academic research and industry needs;
- 2.3.3. The Research Partners will be established with relevant South African public universities, which lead research and evaluation in the CATHSSETA sub-sectors, in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) field, as well as having the Monitoring and Evaluation expertise, to lead and support research initiatives focusing on the development, innovation, and growth of the sectors under CATHSSETA's mandate;
- 2.3.4. Through these university partnerships, the Research Partners will support CATHSSETA's core research functions and address real-world challenges within the sub-sectors;
- 2.3.5. They will play a crucial role in informing the SSP and strategic planning processes, whilst evaluating the implementation and outcomes of learning programmes; and
- 2.3.6. These partnerships will enhance stakeholder participation in research and contribute significantly to the quality of CATHSSETA's research outputs and evaluation products and inform innovation in learning programmes.

3. PURPOSE

- 3.1. Through these research partnerships, CATHSSETA aims to improve its decision-making, conduct in-depth sub-sector-specific research, inform qualification and programme development, policy and shape industry responses to emerging challenges and opportunities; and
- 3.2. The establishment of Research Partners represents a strategic investment in the organisation's capacity to fulfil its mandate and drive meaningful sector development through high-quality research and evidence-based decision-making.

4. OVERALL OBJECTIVE

- 4.1. The primary objective of establishing Research Partners is to foster high-level research into labour market trends, innovation, and the implications of the 4IR in the sector. The specific objective of the Research Partners is to advance research that contributes to:
 - 4.1.1. Understanding labour market trends, skills gaps, occupational shortages, and sector-specific workforce needs;
 - 4.1.2. Investigating and developing innovative solutions in response to the impact of technology, and in particular, the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) on sub-sectoral operations;
 - 4.1.3. Supporting informed decision-making for policy development and organisational skills planning, with a particular emphasis on shaping future workforce needs;
 - 4.1.4. Driving curriculum development and ensuring that qualifications are aligned with current and future industry demands and ensuring that educational frameworks equip individuals with the relevant skills; and
 - 4.1.5. Enhancing sector sustainability through evidence-based strategies that foster innovation, workforce development, and the creation of new knowledge to address emerging challenges.

4.2. The Research Partners will enhance CATHSSETA's ability to:

- 4.2.1. Develop an evidence-based SSP to address sectoral occupational shortages and skills gaps;
- 4.2.2. Promote sustainable growth and transformation within the sector;
- 4.2.3. Facilitate partnerships with industry stakeholders; and
- 4.2.4. Build a research-driven approach to address labour market challenges, facilitate workforce development, and inform technological advancements.

5. DETAILED SCOPE OF WORK

5.1. The Research Partners will focus on the following key areas:

- 5.1.1. Identify current and future labour market trends, skills gaps, and the sector's economic impact;
- 5.1.2. Explore and promote the role of technology, digitisation, and innovation in transforming work processes, business models, and service delivery/skills development efforts within the sector;
- 5.1.3. Inform policy and decision-making processes related to skills development, employment, and sectoral standards;
- 5.1.4. Contribute to the development of the SETA's Research Agenda, research policy and priorities;
- 5.1.5. Examine strategies for developing a skilled, agile workforce that can meet the demands of the evolving sector;
- 5.1.6. Explore learner pathways for long-term sustainability and resilience in the face of economic, social, and technological changes;
- 5.1.7. Initiate impact assessment and tracer studies of skills development initiatives implemented by the CATHSSETA; and

- 5.1.8. Facilitate Board Strategic Planning Sessions to inform the development/ review of strategic planning documents, namely: the SSP, SP, APP and Research Agenda on an annual basis.

6. EXPECTED OUTPUTS/DELIVERABLES

- 6.1. The Research Partners are expected to develop collaborative opportunities, together with CATHSSETA, in the area of knowledge and information sharing. These opportunities include, but are not limited to:

- 6.1.1. Conducting research projects informed by the CATHSSETA-approved Research Agenda. These could be studies on skills needs and development, identifying future skills and emerging occupations, impact and evaluation studies, marketing, branding, competitiveness, as well as social and other economic research;
- 6.1.2. Seminar hosting and presentations at relevant trade shows and platforms;
- 6.1.3. Exchange of information, articles and scientific publications;
- 6.1.4. Participation in conferences and delivering presentations on pertinent research findings, relevant to CATHSSETA;
- 6.1.5. Sharing of the Research Partners' "current articles" with CATHSSETA for purposes of publication on the website;
- 6.1.6. Providing input to the research agenda of CATHSSETA;
- 6.1.7. Publications and co-authoring of research papers and articles;
- 6.1.8. Assisting with high-level analysis and interpretation of current data available through the CATHSSETA projects;
- 6.1.9. Selected Research Partners' representatives serving on a Reference Group, which will be established by CATHSSETA to provide advice related to research projects;

6.1.10. Conducting workshops to selected CATHSSETA staff to build capacity related to publications and research projects; and

6.1.11. The allocation of bursaries to post-graduate (Master's and Doctoral) students through the Discretionary Grant.

6.2. Any publications produced in line with this partnership shall acknowledge the contributions of the relevant parties.

7. RESEARCH PARTNERS' COMPETENCIES AND QUALIFICATIONS REQUIREMENTS

The appointed research partners must meet the following competencies and qualifications to ensure the successful delivery of the project:

7.1. Submit CVs and certified copies of qualifications (not older than six (6) months) for a cross-functional team with proficiency in data mining tools; statistical and analytical skills; evaluation and AI; and forecasting techniques. Including:

7.1.1. A project lead with a minimum of fifteen (15) years' experience and an NQF Level 10 qualification; and

7.1.2. A team composed of established researchers with at least ten (10) years of relevant experience in report writing, data mining, data analytics, as well as qualitative and quantitative research methodologies.

7.2. The technical proposal should include the applicable research methodologies to carry out research within the SETA environment, including detailed ability to engage stakeholders across the nine (9) provinces, resource allocation, risk management, and adherence to the outlined objectives;

- 7.3. Include in the application a company profile with a detailed organogramme, illustrating areas of expertise of the team allocated to this partnership, including their role and involvement in the partnership;
- 7.4. Submit five (5) reference letters to demonstrate previous experience in similar or related research projects. This must be presented in the form of a written letter on official letterhead from clients where similar services have been provided, and this should not be older than five (5) years. The letter should cite the project name, organisation and the contactable reference name and details; and
- 7.5. Submit at least five research reports to demonstrate previous work conducted in similar or related research projects within the SETA environment, highlighting the understanding of applicable SETA legislation and regulatory framework. Similar projects should specifically refer to the SSP, impact assessments, evaluation studies and research studies. The reports could also demonstrate the development of a programme or model or tool based on research.

8. PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE (CONTRACT PERIOD)

- 6.1. The appointed public universities will enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with CATHSSETA for four (4) years and shall be signed with the research partners, upon appointment and acceptance thereof.

9. EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 9.1. Responses will be evaluated in accordance with the following functionality criteria, and the bidder requires a minimum score of 70 points to qualify for the appointment to the panel and shall be based on the highest points scored.

Table 1: Evaluation Criteria for Functionality

EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR FUNCTIONALITY		WEIGHT/ POINTS
1.	Detailed technical proposal	25
2.	Experience in various Research methodologies	30
3.	Human resource capacity, including experience in evaluation and innovation, is linked to the 4IR	20
4.	Track record and experience of the bidding institution	25
Total		100

Table 2: Functionality Evaluation

FUNCTIONALITY EVALUATION		
EVALUATION CRITERIA	SUB-EVALUATION CRITERION	WEIGHT
Detailed technical proposal for the service to be rendered.	Detailed technical proposal comprehensively covering services to be rendered as outlined in ToRs;	20
	Technical proposal covering services to be rendered as outlined in ToRs;	10
	Technical proposal not covering services to be rendered as outlined in ToRs;	0
Detailed research methodology covering the eight (8) elements covered under the detailed scope of work.	Research Methodology is fully responsive to all eight (8) of the elements outlined in the detailed scope of work.	30

FUNCTIONALITY EVALUATION		
EVALUATION CRITERIA	SUB-EVALUATION CRITERION	WEIGHT
	Research Methodology is partially responsive to the seven (7) elements outlined in the detailed scope of work	20
	Research Methodology is responsive to six or fewer elements under the detailed scope of work.	0
Human Resource Capacity CVs and certified copies of qualifications (not less than 6 months) for a cross-functional team with proficiency in data mining tools; statistical and analytical skills; research, evaluation, and AI; and forecasting techniques. Including:	Submitted CVs and certified copies of qualifications and expertise of the Project Lead with an NQF Level 10 qualification and fifteen (15) years of experience in the field of research. A cross-functional team with relevant qualifications and at least ten (10) years' experience in data mining, data analytics and research.	25

FUNCTIONALITY EVALUATION		
EVALUATION CRITERIA	SUB-EVALUATION CRITERION	WEIGHT
- A project lead with a minimum of fifteen (15) years' experience and an NQF Level 10 or above relevant qualification; - A team composed of professionals with at least ten (10) years of relevant experience in data mining, data analytics and research with NQF Level 8 qualification in data science/computer science.	Submitted CVs and certified copies of qualifications and expertise of the Project Lead with less than an NQF Level 10 qualification and less than fifteen (15) years of experience in the field of research. A cross-functional team with less than ten (10) years' experience in data mining, data analytics and research	0
Track record and experience of the bidding institution	Submitted five or more contactable reference letters and five or more research reports relating to similar work/projects done in the last 5 years	25
Submit references to demonstrate previous experience in similar or related research projects.	Submitted fewer than five contactable reference letters and fewer than five research reports relating to similar work/projects done in the last 5 years	15
Presented in the form of a written letter on official letterhead from clients where similar services		

FUNCTIONALITY EVALUATION		
EVALUATION CRITERIA	SUB-EVALUATION CRITERION	WEIGHT
have been provided not older than five (5) years. Provide the project name, organisation and the contactable reference name and details.	Submitted no contactable reference letters and no research reports relating to similar work/projects done in the last 5 years	0

Note: Bids that do not meet the minimum qualifying score for functionality will be eliminated.

CEO APPROVAL	
NAME	Mr MARKS THIBELA
SIGNATURE	
DATE	30/09/2025
Decision: TOR's Approved/ Not Approved	
Comments: None.	