

## **Expression of Interest**

### **Partnership agreements for the commercialisation of Ngiyaqhonda! technology**

The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) invites suitable entities to form partnership agreements for the commercialisation of the Ngiyaqhonda! technology. The Ngiyaqhonda application is an integrated pronunciation scoring solution designed to enhance language learning and literacy development, specifically for South African languages.

This innovative platform integrates multilingual natural language generation (MNLG) with automatic speech recognition (ASR) technology via a mobile technology frontend, allowing users to interact with and practice skills through spoken input and feedback. By emphasising the importance of correct grammar and relevant vocabulary, the app ensures that learners not only acquire language skills but also use them accurately and effectively in real-world contexts. The product seeks to address the challenge of extremely low rates of literacy among South African learners: according to the most recent international benchmarking study, 8 in 10 Grade 4 learners cannot read for basic meaning in their home language. The product covers four official languages of South Africa, namely isiZulu, Sesotho sa Leboa, English and Afrikaans.

Ngiyaqhonda leverages advanced MNLG technology. This innovative technique allows the application to automatically create thousands of grammatically accurate sentences in various South African languages. By utilising NLG, Ngiyaqhonda can offer a richer, more dynamic learning experience. Users are exposed to a diverse range of sentences and language structures that adapt to their learning needs, promoting deeper immersion and better contextual understanding.

The product seeks to address the challenge of extremely low literacy rates among South African learners. According to the most recent international benchmarking study, eight in 10 grade four learners cannot read for basic meaning in their home language. The product currently covers four official South African languages, namely isiZulu, Sesotho sa Leboa, English and Afrikaans.

### **Background**

South Africa faces a severe education crisis, with 81% of Grade 4 learners unable to read for meaning according to the 2023 PIRLS report. This challenge is compounded by over 600,000 visually impaired learners lacking access to assistive technologies, creating a significant barrier to educational progress and better outcomes. Moreover, there is an increasing demand for personalised learning and the rising costs of access to education leaving those in the lower LSM behind. Public schools in SA operate with

limited budgets. For instance, schools in underprivileged areas often struggle with basic resources and infrastructure thus making it difficult to respond to the individual needs of their learners.

The ideal partner should possess strong software development and integration capabilities and should specifically meet the following requirements:

1. Software development skills: The partner should have proven experience in software development and integration;
2. Customisation and scalability: The partner should demonstrate the ability to customise the platform to address the unique challenges of different schools and integrate it with existing learner management tools;
3. Market access and distribution networks: The partner should have established networks and relationships with key stakeholders in the education sector;
4. Proven track record: The partner should have a demonstrated history of successful project delivery, particularly in developing and deploying new technology solutions;
5. Collaborative mindset: The partner must be willing to work closely with the CSIR, sharing knowledge, resources and expertise to co-develop and refine the platform for maximum impact;
6. Financial stability and resource availability: The partner should demonstrate financial stability and have the resource capacity to invest in the development, deployment and ongoing maintenance of the platform;
7. Commercial capabilities: The partner should demonstrate strong business acumen and the ability to develop and execute a viable commercialisation strategy. This includes identifying revenue streams, pricing models and marketing strategies to ensure the platform's financial sustainability and widespread adoption. Experience in negotiating partnerships, securing funding and driving sales within the respective sector is essential; and
8. Product design capabilities: The partner should possess expertise in product design to ensure the tool is intuitive, visually appealing and functionally effective. This includes the ability to conduct user research, create wireframes and prototypes and iterate based on feedback to deliver a solution that meets the needs of all stakeholders. A focus on human-centred design principles will be critical to the platform's success.

**Scope of work:**

- Identify and pursue market opportunities for the deployment of the technology;
- Conduct market validation and develop a go-to-market strategy for the commercialisation of the tools; and
- Develop, validate and refine a business model.

### **Submission of Expressions of Interest**

Interested parties are required to submit a detailed business case clearly demonstrating a viable plan for commercialising the technology. The business case must include three-year financial projections; a clear revenue model; a technology deployment plan (if applicable), market analysis, including segmentation, targeting and positioning, as well as Total Addressable Market, Serviceable Available Market and Serviceable Obtainable Market); and identification of risk areas, along with proposed risk mitigation strategies.

#### **The following documentation must also be included:**

- Proof of Small, Medium and Micro Enterprise status as per National Small Enterprise Act (e.g., Central Supplier Database report); and
- Company profile highlighting experience in software development and numerical modelling.

The Expression of Interest submitted by companies must be signed by a person or persons duly authorised thereto.

### **Evaluation process and criteria**

All proposals will be evaluated by an evaluation committee against the following criteria:

- Confirmation of SMME status.
- Registration as South African company.
- Clear business case.
- Demonstratable ability to carry out scope of work as outlined in Section 5 of this EoI document.

Short-listed applicants may be required to present to the CSIR and shall be notified thereof no later than seven days prior to the presentation date.

Please note: If you have not heard from us within 12 weeks of applying, please consider your application unsuccessful.

Elimination criteria

Eol submissions will be eliminated under the following conditions:

- Submission after the deadline.
- Submitted to an incorrect address.
- Eol submissions that do not accompany the mandatory criteria as listed above.

**Closing date for application: 21 November 2025 at 16:30.**

**Submission link: <https://www.csir.co.za/invitation> proposals**

The CSIR requires that all Eol submissions be submitted electronically using the link mentioned above. Should the file size exceed 30 MB, the interested parties can submit Eols in multiple emails. Use the Eol number and the description of the Eol as the subject on your email.

For more information, please contact: Sipho Dikweni Email: [SDikweni@csir.co.za](mailto:SDikweni@csir.co.za)

**Terms and Conditions apply**