

## TERMS OF REFERENCE: ANNEXURE A

SCM /Tender Ref #:	DPME 20/ 2022-2023
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Request for proposals for:	Panel of Service Providers: Invitation to serve on DPME panel of researchers, evaluators, sector experts and other related specialists in the generation of evidence for policy for a period of 36 months.
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### 1. BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

The Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) in the Presidency has been a champion in developing, promoting and evaluating policy-relevant research and knowledge generation since its inception. The Evidence-Based Policy Making (EBPM) introduced by the Program to Support Pro-poor Policy Development (PSPPD) within the Presidency between 2008-2018 created awareness and established the foundation for rigorous evidence to be used in decision making at all stages of the policy cycle. Currently, emphasis has shifted to Evidence Informed Decision making (EIDM) due to the recognition that policies are informed by various sources of evidence, rather than based on academic sources alone. Multiple sources and types of evidence is thus consulted to inform policy design, planning, implementation and evaluation/reviews. This requires a strategic approach and sound research methodology to engage with a body of knowledge. No single study or flagship report is adequate to address the evidence needs of the work of DPME in its Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation functions. For this reason, DPME has piloted, developed and applied evidence synthesis methodology across the Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) priority areas since 2014.

There are different approaches to synthesizing various sources of evidence for policy, although ensuring relevance, transparency, inclusiveness and validity across sectors and policy areas is often the challenge. The concept of “evidence synthesis<sup>1</sup>” puts focus on transparent and systematic methods in how evidence is sourced and used to inform policy and decision making. With the establishment of a supporting research function and service to DPME (as well as other public entities), a “Research and Knowledge Management” strategy was introduced, adopting evidence synthesis as an approach to broker between evidence generated by the wider research system (Universities, Science Councils, Research Institutes & Think Tanks) and the knowledge needs of policy makers.

Several strategic evidence outputs and knowledge products have been completed using a combination of in-house capacity and outsourcing of specific technical skills. Findings of these reports have informed high level discussion and debates in a timely manner. Turnaround times for delivering on evidence was met efficiently to meet demand without compromising on quality and rigor. It is against this background, that the need to deepen and expand capability for evidence synthesis within DPME and its utility in various policy domains across government, has been prioritized over the short and medium term.

### 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this call is to expand DPME capacity for evidence synthesis through broadening the skills base and complementing DPME capacity with experts from the wider knowledge sector nationally. The establishment of a Panel of Service Providers (PSP) by DPME will provide planners, sector experts, researchers, data scientists, methodology experts and information specialists the opportunity to contribute to knowledge production and translation across key national policy priorities.

### 3. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF PROJECT

There are seven priorities defined in the current MTSF (2019-2024) which provide the scope within which evidence needs will be anticipated. A combination of data, evaluations and research projects, are expected ranging from short term (2 weeks/1-3 months/6 month) assignments to longer term (1-3 year) assignments, when responding to specific policy or investigative questions identified by senior officials and policy makers through DPME. The priority policy areas are outlined below:

Priority 1: A Capable, Ethical and Developmental State

Priority 2: Economic Transformation and Job Creation

Priority 3: Education, Skills and Health

Priority 4: Consolidating the Social Wage through Reliable and Quality Basic Services

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<sup>1</sup> Gough et al, 2020 define evidence synthesis as “the review of what is known from existing research using systematic and explicit methods in order to clarify the evidence base”

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Priority 5: Spatial Integration, Human Settlements and Local Government

Priority 6: Social Cohesion and Safe Communities

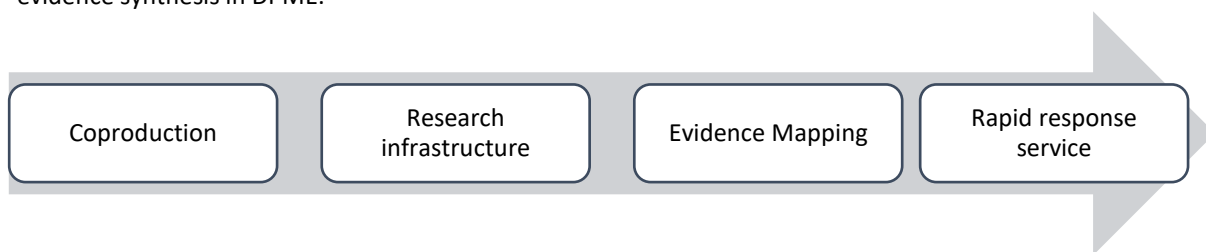
Priority 7: A better Africa and World

The following objectives of the panel are set out:

- 3.1. Broaden the base of knowledge producers who will contribute to an evidence informed developmental agenda by responding to a range of knowledge products such as rapid reviews; international benchmarking exercises; case studies; technical, analytical reports and other relevant knowledge products.
- 3.2. Represent the existing and independent National System of Innovation (NSI) and scientific voice in South Africa through ensuring quality, rigor and scientific methods in generating evidence.
- 3.3. Complement the experiential knowledge of policy makers and senior government officials in DPME by adopting a coproduction approach in how evidence and knowledge is used.
- 3.4. Respond to call for proposals in undertaking assignments that involve data generation, research analysis, evaluation projects, case studies and/or evidence synthesis to inform the seven national policy priority areas as per the current MTSF 2019-2024.
- 3.5. Bring capability for use of big data and other innovations to overcome data challenges to support evidence production.

#### 4. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY / APPROACH

There are 4 domains of evidence synthesis which are inter-dependent. Capacity is thus spread across these domains, with each contributing to a value chain that is critical in the development of a systems approach behind evidence synthesis in DPME.



- **Coproduction** – This is the process through which evidence is produced, curated and made accessible for analysis and synthesis in a collaborative relationship between Government officials and knowledge producers from the external research system. It Involves matching experience and expertise within the system of Government with the system of science and innovation. Effective knowledge governance provide formal processes through which evidence is engaged with collectively. This domain ensures effective research-policy interface and value for money of publicly funded research. The PSP will adopt a coproduction model in all evidence synthesis projects of DPME. Principles and procedures for engagement will be communicated with successful proposals.
- **Research infrastructure** – An internationally renowned, well-functioning and adequately resourced research infrastructure exists within the South African NSI, which Government and DPME can leverage from and strengthen the availability of evidence for policy. Access to quality, timely and reliable data and information from scientific, searchable information systems is necessary for evidence synthesis across sectors and policy areas. Through the coproduction process, critical knowledge will be generated in an integrated and coordinated manner. This will add value to organizational and institutional level knowledge resources for the public sector. The PSP will play a critical role in access to research and other forms of evidence for use by the public sector.
- **Evidence Mapping** – DPME RKM unit has funded and built an in-house “Policy relevant Evidence Mapping” platform since 2016. This is a scoping tool which has initiated the development of an evidence base per priority area, including research and evaluation evidence. The PSP will engage with these Evidence Maps, identify evidence gaps, build the knowledge base and contribute towards research agenda setting for Government in priority areas of need, as defined through policy questions that arise from time to time.
- **Rapid response service** – The complex environment within which DPME operates regarding policy design, unblocking of implementation challenges, oversight of government performance and advisory capacity to political principals, requires rapidly responding to information and evidence needs in the form of a helpdesk. This requires DPME to seek new and innovative ways in contracting specific technical

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skills, external expertise and other consultations with sector experts. The PSP is regarded as a resource for DPME to respond rapidly on tailored evidence services, yet ensure that advise/options which inform decisions are based on science and other relevant sources of evidence. It is different from longer term contracts for individual primary research and evaluation projects.

The following steps are followed in the evidence synthesis approach used by DPME across any assignment. These broad steps provide an indication of how the approach will be initiated once the PSP is notified of the assignment, bids are received and successful service providers are recruited directly from the PSP, thereby reducing the contracting time since bidders on the PSP will already have been adjudicated:

STEPS	MILESTONES
1. Understanding of assignment, research questions, scope and related evidence need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting with DPME team (planning; sector monitoring; institutional public service monitoring;)</li> <li>Clarity on the assignment with deliverables and time frames agreed to</li> </ul>
2. Agree on evidence sources and types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify evidence sources (academic, government; grey literature; think tanks; international) and types (qualitative; quantitative; reviews; synthesis)</li> </ul>
3. Develop a transparent evidence base and critically appraise the available evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize the evidence sources and types into a credible, critically appraise where possible and prepare the evidence base for extraction of information to respond to the assignment</li> </ul>
4. Data extraction and quality control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extract relevant data and information in the process of analysis and/or synthesis</li> </ul>
5. Integration of evidence to generate key findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data/evidence extracts are integrated to produce key findings across the evidence base</li> </ul>
6. Draft report presented to DPME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Findings organized and summarized into a report including visualizations</li> </ul>
7. Finalization of knowledge output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report/policy brief/ review</li> </ul>

### 5. DELIVERABLES AND TIME FRAMES

The PSP will be established in 2022/23 and successful bidders will be contracted to serve on the panel for three years. An opportunity to respond to short term assignments will be granted based on the conclusion of the SCM process. Contracts will be renewable year on year (2023/24; 2024/25; 2025/26) depending on performance. Applications from individuals and organizations are invited to be represented on the panel, based on qualifying criteria. Once the DPME PSP is established, members will have access to notices for short term assignments and the opportunity to bid for these assignments within a short turnaround time. Assignments will vary, depending on the needs expressed across DPME workstreams, but usually involve data and information gathering, secondary analysis, rapid reviews and synthesis.

### 6. PROJECT MANAGEMENT / REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

The PSP will be managed by a project team from the Evaluations, Evidence and Knowledge Systems (EEKS) branch of DPME, and will be a resource to all the units of DPME across the planning, monitoring and evaluation functions during the contract period. Assignments and tasks will be communicated via a dedicated channel between the unit requesting the service and the successful bidder. Deliverables and performance will be monitored by the project team.

### 7. PEER REVIEW

Some panel members may be called to undertake peer-review tasks as a specific assignment. This will not serve for academic purposes, rather for internal quality control, independence and rigor.

### 8. OTHER

Adherence to the principles and approach to coproduction of knowledge and evidence for policy is a requirement.