TICZA

TEACHER INTERNSHIP COLLABORATION SOUTH AFRICA

Request for Proposals

Competency Testing

as part of the Prototyping of a Standardised Approach for Extended Student Teacher Internships

Timelines:

1. RfP opens: 13 March 2026
2. Optional online vendor Q&A session: 18 March 2026, 08:30-10:00 (MS Teams Link here)
3. Clarification questions: up to 20 March 2026 COB
4. Submission deadline: 27 March 2026 COB
5. Review and selection: 30 March - 3 April 2026
6. Award date: 8 April 2026

Background

TICZA was initiated in 2021 to explore effective ways of strengthening Work Integrated Learning (WIL), also known as school-based learning, practice-based learning, teaching practice, or teaching practicum, for student teachers completing Bachelor of Education (BEd) or Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programmes through distance learning universities. See more here:
https://www.jet.org.za/projects/all-projects/teacher-internship-collaboration-south-africa-ticza

Over the past five years (2021–2025), the project has focused particularly on what it terms the Extended Student Teacher Internship programme, which emphasises placing student teachers in schools for an extended period while they receive wraparound support delivered through Implementation Partner (IP)-led programmes. Since its inception, TICZA has established a stakeholder network that includes funders, universities, government departments, knowledge and statutory organisations, teacher unions, and IPs.

To date, the work has focused on mapping the ESTI landscape, conducting surveys of IPs and student teachers, and testing the competency of newly qualified teachers who have participated in extended internships. See more about the first phase of the TICZA project (concluding at the end of 2025) here: https://youtu.be/pBGWTZ0klw4

Over the past four years, TICZA, functioning as a collective impact collaboration, has initiated and contributed to a wide range of activities. These included 18 Communities of Practice, which facilitated robust discussions, the sharing of best practices, and cross-institutional learning. TICZA also undertook various research initiatives such as Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) competency testing and cost-effectiveness analyses. In addition, the collaboration took part in several conferences, including the Evidence Network Conference 2024 and the UNISA Teaching Practice Lekgotla, as well as multiple TICZA-hosted workshops and NASCEE-led webinars. TICZA has also produced several knowledge products, including the Implementation Compendium, the TICZA Digest, and various reports from the Communities of Practice and webinars. A summative evaluation of TICZA was completed in August 2025 (see here):
https://www.jet.org.za/resources/ticza-summative-evaluation-report_final/@@display-file/file

From the inception of TICZA considerable effort went into creating a common agenda (as one of the five core components of the collective impact approach). In the early stages, the focus was quite wide, namely to (Shiohira et al., 2022):

- gather and share evidence regarding alternative teacher education pathways (ATEP), specifically extended student teacher internships, as a means of demonstrating their efficiencies and impact;
- establish such internships as a credible alternative pathway for ITE; and
- drive and organise cooperation between all partners involved in ITE to facilitate the effective adoption and implementation of internships as a formal pathway to a teaching qualification.

The notion of ESTIs in South Africa as an alternative pathway was debated at length, leading to a consensus to move away from the 'alternative' terminology while recognising that ESTIs represent a more vocationally oriented approach to initial teacher education (ITE). As the TICZA process matured it was agreed that the ESTI model constituted a mainstream offering that followed the same qualifications route as current existing B. Ed ITE training approaches albeit with the following modifications:

- distance education offered through an HEI; and

- WIL with Essential Wraparound Support (EWAS) (see McQueen 2025) offered by a non-profit implementing partner - see more here: https://www.jet.org.za/resources/EWAS-ESTI.

This model is therefore not to be understood as an alternative pathway based on a non-degree certification, although it may share similarities with other programmes that rely on intensive work-based experience to prepare potential teachers for the realities of the classroom. More on these alternatives is provided in the TICZA critical evidence review, see here.

The focus and therefore the common agenda of TICZA soon became one of "institutionalising ESTIs" within South African ITE policies and practices. In order to empirically demonstrate that this ESTI model (which includes EWAS) was more effective than the mainstream offering, a quasi-experimental research design[1] was chosen. This choice of research design soon ran into limitations:

- The IPs offered diverse ESTI models - i.e., there was no standardised model that could be tested.
- Data collected from IPs was not representative enough of the participant population, with several challenges related to low numbers of participants, intellectual property restrictions, and a general low response rate.
- The critical role of the IP-HEI relationships was only established in the later period of TICZA as participation deepened and the evidence base developed.
- Key institutional relationships were still under development, limiting the ability to secure comparison group data from the DBE and also from UNISA (as a key distance teacher education provider).

The limitations outlined above presented an opportunity for TICZA to revisit the research agenda in order to re-imagine and refocus TICZA's efforts around its common agenda. This, in turn, led to a refined purpose for the research agenda and the adoption of an appropriate methodology. Through a series of realignment workshops and the validation of the TICZA Theory of Change, the re-imagining process has established a solid foundation co-created with the TICZA ESTI ecosystem.

The current formation of TICZA yielded two key innovations that are ready for testing and potentially proving the validity of the ESTI concept as one of the solutions for extant ITE theory-practice gaps. These innovations are the EWAS model and the Common Competency Framework (CCF). The EWAS model was developed to articulate the baseline support provided to student teachers undertaking an ESTI, including the 'professional, academic and emotional support [provided] for student teachers and [running] parallel to HEI modules', consisting of 'supervision, mentoring, professional development and assessment of student teachers' (McQueen, 2025, p. 8). The Common Competency Framework was collaboratively developed in alignment with the SACE Professional Teaching Standards, but with a specific focus on tailoring these into practice standards linked to observable classroom behaviours and actions by student teachers. The CCF will be used as a tool during the prototyping phase of TICZA to monitor the progression of student teacher interns during their WIL sessions, with the validation process for the CCF to be integrated into the

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[1] The research design for Phase 1 of TICZA shifted from a longitudinal, comparative quasi-experimental model to a descriptive non-experimental design due to difficulties in establishing the parameters of a comparative group for activities such as competency testing. This was also due to the variation in programme structure and design among IPs. As an alternative, the research model shifted to focus on determining the factors and cost considerations of a standardised model for prototyping and institutionalisation, through activities such as the cost-effectiveness analysis, essential wraparound support report, and critical review of research and IP monitoring documents, with the aim of revisiting the quasi-experimental approach as part of Phase 2 activities.

TICZA prototyping research and evaluation plan. The clarity of the refined aim of the research enables the following:

- explicit delineation of a standardised model with essential wraparound support (EWAS) to be prototyped;
- utilisation of the TICZA Common Competency Framework (CCF) (including its validation) to measure teacher competence in a consistent manner in a pre/post research design, and with consideration of the vocational orientation;
- extrapolation of the cost effective analysis (CEA) conducted by Trialogue (but not released in the public domain due to its limited scope) into a full cost benefit analysis (CBA) that will use common metrics and focus on the affordability of the model for government funding schemas such as NSFAS, Funza Lushaka[2] and SETA learnerships; and
- identification of an explicit comparison group from distance education providers where EWAS is not included.

The primary objectives of this 24-month (2026-2028) prototyping phase are to:

1. Demonstrate Competency: Empirically test whether the standardised ESTI model identified through TICZA produces more competent teachers than those trained through standard distance education programmes.
2. Determine Affordability and Viability: Explore whether the model can be sustainably funded via public funded bursaries, and validate the usability, content and reliability of the CCF tool across experiment and control groups.
3. Establish Evidence Base: Generate a robust evidence base to inform decision-making regarding the institutionalisation and potential national scale-up of the ESTI model within the South African education system.
4. Refine the Standardised ESTI Model: Rigorously test and refine the fidelity of implementation of the standardised ESTI model and its Essential Wraparound Support (EWAS) components across participating Higher Education Institution (HEI) and Implementing Partner (IP) consortia.

The findings of the prototyping process are explicitly intended to have policy relevance, leading to actionable inputs for national policy instruments such as MRTEQ reviews, WIL frameworks, FLBP refinements, and teacher placement systems. Ultimately the prototyping process aims to contribute directly to systemic improvement.

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[2] FLBP-funded student teachers is a state bursary scheme governed by DBE policy that has specific subject requirements and entry requirements, as well as service-obligation requirements. Participation of FLBP beneficiaries in the proposed prototyping will be fully aligned with FLBP policy frameworks, including placement priorities, monitoring arrangements and conditions of support.

Service: Competency testing

Objective

Assessing student teacher interns' competence progression through the use of the TICZA Common Competency Framework (CCF) and its rubric tool during the prototype implementation.

Background

TICZA aims to improve the quality of initial teacher education through extended school-based internships. As we move into the prototyping phase, we require a service provider to implement a robust competency testing framework that measures not just theoretical knowledge, but the practical readiness of student teacher interns during the standardised ESTI model within South African quintile 1-3 primary schools. The cohort of students to be assessed are as follows:

Table 1: Student cohort

Features	Treatment Group	Comparison Group
No of Students	200	200 + contact students (optional))
Year of study	3rd years in 2026; 4th years in 2027 (the same cohort)	
Teaching phase	Foundation Phase	
Location	South Africa	
Mode of Learning	Distance	Distance + contact (optional)
School placement	Quintile 1-3 Geographical locations of students will be confirmed in consultation with the DBE and the appointed consortia. An attempt will be made to group students in geographical proximities where possible within a province and/or district.	

Scope of Work

In line with the TICZA prototyping process and timelines the service provider will be required to develop and implement appropriate and relevant assessment design that will support and direct its work at two data collection points (baseline and endline). Results from competency assessments will be triangulated with other data collection points.

The service provider will be expected to deliver the following:

1. Develop a suitable rigorous competency assessment design and plan that include baseline, and endline competency testing.
2. The assessment design must be guided by the TICZA prevalidated Common Competency Framework (CCF), see it here: https://www.jet.org.za/resources/ccf-card-design_final_pdf_prevalidated-draft.pdf/@@display-file/file
3. The service provider will be expected to use the TICZA CCF and its associated assessment rubric to carry out the competency tests from baseline to endline.

4. Participate in stakeholder training, review and assist in facilitating online and physical workshops for student teachers, mentor teachers and project mentors on how to use the CCF and its rubric.
5. A live reporting dashboard for tracking progress of student teacher interns' progress.
6. We invite the service provider to propose value-added enhancements, particularly in light of potential updates to the CCF following the validation process.

Technical Requirements

Interested service providers should submit the following:

7. Technical Proposal: An overview of the methodology for competency assessment within the South African school context, quintile 1-3 primary schools. The proposal must explicitly detail the application of the TICZA CCF for measuring student teacher intern competency development across baseline and endline.
8. Evidence of previous work in similar projects, teacher education, ITE, WIL, and/or pilot-scale educational projects.
9. Compliance with POPIA (Protection of Personal Information Act) regarding all the data that will be gathered in this project.
10. Financial Proposal: A phased budget aligned with the prototyping timeline.

Deliverables

11. Inception report of 10 pages (2 weeks after contracting) with a clear methodology on how the competency testing will be implemented and operationalised and a protocol for stakeholder engagement.
12. Workshop, co-preparation and facilitation of how to use the common competency framework for tracking student teacher intern's development progress (April 2026).
13. Live reporting dashboard, with visualisation of students progress (from June 2026).
14. Draft baseline assessment report 30 pages and slide deck (June 2026).
15. Final baseline assessment report 45 pages and slide deck (June 2026).
16. Draft endline assessment report 30 pages and slide deck (December 2027).
17. Final endline assessment report 45 pages and slide deck (January 2028).
18. Data Collection/Field work report and Final dataset (anonymised) provided in Excel or other standard format, as well as contribution to ongoing data monitoring and quality assurance processes
19. Cross-services collaborations as will be agreed to within reasonable demands (e.g. seminars, COPs, planning and reflective sessions).

Project Duration and Budget

20. The baseline will take place between April and June 2026.
21. The endline will take place between October 2027 and January 2028.
22. The total budget for this service is R600,000 (VAT excl.).

Evaluation criteria

All bidders will be evaluated based on the following weighted matrix:

Table 2: Evaluation criteria

Criteria	Weight	Description
Compliance	10%	Supporting evidence for registration status of company, SARS good standing, BBBEE and audited financial statements not older than two years
Technical competence	60%	Ability to meet the specific service requirements
Relevant experience	20%	Past performance in similar projects
Budget	10%	Value for money

Governance and reporting requirements

The following TICZA governance structures will oversee and guide the work of service providers:

- TICZA Steering Committee: decision-making, appointments, quality assurance, monitoring of project deliverables and budget approvals
- TICZA Funders Group: monitoring of budget, guidance to secretariat
- TICZA Selection Committee: review and selection of submissions; recommendations to the Steering Committee for appointments
- TICZA Secretariat (JET Education Services): contracting, day-to-day reporting

Ethical and data compliance requirements

Service providers are required to comply with Non-medical Human Research Ethics Protocols, POPIA, SACE protocols, and DBE school research permissions. This includes following the HEIs' internal protocols and adhering to TICZA's data sharing and storage protocols.

- All data access, school-level activity, or engagement with provincial education departments must follow established DBE research approval and provincial coordination protocols. Service providers are to respect the fact that schools are learning sites first and foremost, and that research,lesson observations, and competency testing must be designed to minimise disruption to teaching and learning.
- The involvement of student teachers, particularly in quintile 1–3 schools should strengthen classroom practice and mentorship capacity, rather than add administrative or supervisory burdens to schools and districts.
- The DBE and PEDs retain oversight of any system-level insights derived from public investments, and findings intended to inform policy must be shared through agreed governance structures before public dissemination.

Eligibility and submission guidelines

Clarification questions may be submitted to Tshegofatso Mashaphu, (tshegofatsomoabelo@jet.org.za) up to 20 March 2026 COB. Please take into account that all submitted questions and responses will be shared in the public domain. Application submissions should be made to tenders@jet.org.za

Format of submissions:

1. Maximum of 10 pages (excluding annexures), using a minimum of 11pt font and single spacing.
2. Providers may bid for multiple TICZA services.
3. A full activity budget.
4. Names of specific staff members that will be involved (short CVs to be included as an annexure and do not count towards the page limit).
5. Additional information as preferred.
6. Compliance documents, CIPC registration, Tax registration etc.

TICZA will conduct a desktop process to evaluate all submitted proposals through a Selection Committee comprising SACE, DBE, DHET and Funders. Shortlisted bidders may be required to present their proposals to the Selection Committee.

Successful service providers will be formally notified. A service level agreement (SLA) will be signed, outlining the roles, responsibilities, research protocols, and funding allocations.

While every effort has been made to ensure the information in this document is accurate at the time of release, any errors or omissions in this RfP will be communicated in the public domain if necessary before the submission date.

The TICZA Steering Committee reserves the right not to appoint a service provider for any of the listed services.

Contact for inquiries: All queries regarding this RfP and the submission should be directed to: Tshegofatso Mashaphu, tshegofatsomoabelo@jet.org.za. Applications sent to this email address will not be accepted.

Only emailed applications to tenders@jet.org.za will be considered in PDF format. Annexures need to be included in a single bound PDF. Submissions should not exceed 25 MB.

End.