



TICZA

TEACHER INTERNSHIP
COLLABORATION SOUTH AFRICA

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

Participation in Prototyping a Standardised Approach
for Extended Student Teacher Internships

Submission Deadline: 31 January 2026

Request for Proposals

Participation in Prototyping a Standardised Approach for Extended Student Teacher Internships

For release: 12 December 2025

1. Purpose of the assignment

The Teacher Internship Collaboration South Africa (TICZA) is issuing this request for proposals (RFP) to appoint a four-partnership consortia, each comprising a public university offering a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) degree via distance learning and an implementing partner (IP) that provides wraparound support to B.Ed students in school-based, extended internship programmes.

The primary aim of this prototyping phase is to:

- Demonstrate that the standardised ESTI model identified through TICZA produces more competent teachers¹, at a cost affordable to the public fiscus, than teachers trained through other distance education programmes.
- Contribute to a robust evidence base from ongoing TICZA knowledge development, to support the institutionalisation and potential scale-up of the ESTI model within the South African education ecosystem.

Overall, TICZA aims to improve teacher quality by aligning with, and positively contribute to, the strengthening of key teacher education policies and processes that include a focus on work integrated learning (WIL) and teaching practice, such as MRTEQ, the ISPFTED, the SACE Professional Teaching Standards (PTS), and the review of teacher qualifications by the CHE.

We invite consortia of accredited public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) offering teacher education through the distance mode, and Implementing Partners (IPs), to *opt-in* to this 24-month (2026-2028) research study. IPs should be registered non-profit organisations.

Successful consortia will implement the standardised ESTI model within the following required cohorts of student teachers:

¹ Competency will be assessed using the standardised TICZA Common Competency Framework (CCF) as the primary measure. Existing measures, such as HEI assessments and IP-administered tools, will continue in parallel and will serve as secondary data points.



- 50 in a treatment group;
- 50 in an experimental group; and
- an optional 25-50 in a second experimental group

Through this research study, the consortia will be contributing to the robust evidence base required for the potential national institutionalisation and scale-up of this transformative approach to teacher preparation.

2. 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.

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 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 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 to be released in January 2026.

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 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, 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 control 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 Essential Wraparound Support (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 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 and SETA learnerships; and
- identification of an explicit control group from distance education providers where EWAS is not included.

3. Scope

This RFP invites public HEI-IP partnerships to formally opt into the prototyping process. Successful applicants will be required to implement the defined standardised ESTI model with a minimum of 100 student teachers (per partnership) over a 24-month period:

1. 50 distance education student teachers who will form the treatment group by receiving EWAS (required)
2. 50 distance education student teachers from the same institution to serve as the control group who do not receive EWAS (required)



3. 25-50 fulltime student teachers from the same institution to serve as a second control group who do not receive EWAS (optional)

The EWAS component for the selected student teachers registered for BEd Foundation Phase in Year 3 of study, to be placed in Quintile 1-3 will be funded through TICZA. Participation of consortia requires alignment with the core research design and dedicated participation in the research activities.

The following funding will be provided to each consortia, subject to meeting the criteria outlined in this RFP, appointment, and signing of a service-level agreement with JET acting as the TICZA Secretariat:

- EWAS: R30,000 per student per year (2026), R31,350 per student per year (2027) payable to IPs (no direct payments will be made to students)
- HEI research allocations: R30,000 for a research manager per year for two years; R15,000 for a research officer per year for two years payable to HEIs
- IP staff time: R138,000 for a project manager per year for two years; R119,000 for a technical officer per year for two years payable to IPs

Tranche payments will be made based on key milestones to be agreed to in the SLA.

Funding will be pooled and managed by the Secretariat. Funding to HEIs and IPs will be disbursed by the Secretariat based on agreed SLAs, and based on appointments approved by the Steering Committee. Financial reporting will be finalised in SLAs, but a quarterly cadence should be anticipated.

4. Objectives

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. 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, qualitative, quantitative data, using mixed-methods 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 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.



5. Refine the CCF: Rigorously test the validity of the feel and look, content and usability of the Common Competency tool across both the experimental and the control group.
6. Contribute to the strengthening of key teacher education policies and processes that include a focus on work integrated learning (WIL) and teaching practice: MRTEQ, the ISPFTED, the SACE Professional teaching Standards (PTS), and the review of teacher qualifications by the CHE.

5. Timelines

The table below provides a high-level summary of the anticipated timelines that relate to this RfP. Detailed timelines will be agreed with successful consortia and will be included in the SLA processes.

2025	11 December	Release of RfP
2026	15 January	Closing date for clarification questions
	31 January	Due date for submissions
	15 February	Review and screening
	28 February	Final selection and recommendations by the Selection Committee
	6 March	Review and appointment by the Steering Committee
	mid-March	Contracting
	April-May	Baseline data collection
	26 June	Steering Committee updates
	28 August	Steering Committee updates
	27 November	Steering Committee updates
2027	March	Steering Committee updates
	June	Steering Committee updates
	August	Steering Committee updates



	October-November	Endline data collection ²
	November	Steering Committee updates
2028	February	Final reports released

6. Eligibility and selection criteria

Proposals must be submitted by a partnership comprising a public HEI and one or more implementing partners.

- 6.1 Partnership requirements
 - Each partnership must track and report the student teachers in the treatment group as well as the student teachers in the control group(s) for the duration of the prototyping process, using a standardised reporting template .
 - The HEI partner must be a public university offering a distance B.Ed programme.
 - The IP must be a registered non-profit organisation with at least 5 years of experience in delivering school based support initiatives.
 - Student teachers must be placed in Quintile 1-3 public primary schools for their ESTI experience.
- 6.2 Student teacher profile (prototyping cohort)
 - Bachelors in Education (B.Ed) at a public university.
 - Foundation Phase (with a preference for those focused on South African indigenous languages (excluding English and Afrikaans) and have passed the language at matric.
 - Language requirements (African languages for FP teaching)
 - Student teachers must be in Year 3 of the B.Ed degree in the year 2026.
 - Student teachers must be recipients of a public teacher education bursary. Funza Lushaka will be prioritised.
 - Minimum academic performance (no repeaters).
 - Selections of students will align with Funza Lushaka Bursary Programme Guidelines.
 - Selected students must be vetted for compliance with Criminal Law Amendment Act.
 - Selected students must be registered with SACE.
 - Requirement that students must remain in participating schools unless moved through a controlled process.
 - Students must sign research participation and commitment agreements.

² The timing of the endline will be finalised in consultation with the Steering Committee and successful consortia.



7. Key requirements

Participating HEI-IP partnerships must commit to implementing the standardised EWAS components for the 50 student teachers in the treatment group, which includes:

Component	Treatment group (with EWAS)	Control group(s) (no EWAS)
EWAS funding	R30,000 per student teacher for 2026 (adjusted annually for inflation)	No additional funding to be provided
Student cohort	Years 3 and 4 of the B.Ed degree	Years 3 and 4 of the B.Ed degree
Induction and orientation	Standard as per HEI policy	Standard as per HEI policy
Mentoring/supervision	Supervision and mentoring by project mentors on 1:25 ratio	Standard as per HEI policy
On-site days	21 days per year of on-site mentorship	Standard as per HEI policy
Professional development	28 full days of professional development	Standard as per HEI policy
Wellness and Psychosocial Support	Standard as per HEI policy	Standard as per HEI policy
Peer Learning Communities	Standard as per HEI policy	Standard as per HEI policy
Classroom Observation Cycles	Standard as per HEI policy	Standard as per HEI policy
Tracking, M&E and Reporting	As required through the SLA with TICZA	As required through the SLA with TICZA
Assessment	7 lesson observation assessments of student teachers per year	Standard as per HEI policy
Common Competency Framework	Lesson observation will be conducted against the CCF; the CCF will also be used to review and design mentoring guidelines and other instruments.	Standard as per HEI policy

Non-financial incentives for school-based mentors are encouraged, including alignment with DBE offerings (offered via the VVOB platform) and SACE endorsements. Successful consortia will be encouraged to follow similar approaches to incentivizing school-based mentors.

Specific research responsibilities of each consortium will be based on the table above to be outlined in the SLA:

- Monitoring and reporting on cohorts using a standardised template
- Attending project meetings with the Secretariat
- Attending Steering Committee meetings
- Collaborating with external service providers as may be required
- Review of draft research reports

8. Governance and reporting requirements

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

- 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
- Other service providers that will be appointed: Survey, cost-benefit analysis, competency testing, lesson observations and sustainability model

The following reporting and participation should be considered by consortia:

- Monthly and quarterly reporting (including financials): to be guided by the Secretariat using standard and agreed templates and to be finalised in SLA
- Data submission timelines: as above
- Participation in TICZA Communities of Practice is strongly recommended
- Annual research convenings

9. Ethical and Data Compliance Requirements

Consortia are required to comply with POPIA, SACE protocols, and DBE school research permissions. This includes following the HEI's internal protocols and adhering to TICZA's data sharing and storage protocols. The ethical clearance of the CCF approved by the CHE in 2025 can be made available on request.



10. Application Process

The selection process for participation in the ESTI Prototyping Study is an opt-in process designed to select the most suitable public HEI and IP consortia.

- **Step 1: Clarification questions**

Clarification questions may be submitted to Tshegofatso Mashaphu, (tshegofatsomoabelo@jet.org.za) up to 15 January 2026. **Please take into account that all submitted questions and responses will be shared in the public domain.**

Timelines: Up to 15 January 2026

- **Step 2: Submission of applications**

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

The submission must explicitly address:

1. Partnership Confirmation: Confirmation of the formal partnership structure between the HEI (Public university offering distance B.Ed programme) and the IP (registered non-profit organisation).
2. Cohort Commitment: A firm commitment to track and provide the required minimum of 100 student teachers for the duration of the prototyping process, including an internal risk analysis and risk management plan.
3. Alignment with Standardised Model: An affirmation of the consortium's capacity and willingness to implement the full set of requirements for the Standardised ESTI Model (EWAS components) as detailed in this RFP (e.g., supervision ratios, on-site days, professional development days, and use of the TICZA Common Competency Framework).
4. Target Student Profile: Confirmation that the student teachers will be B.Ed Foundation Phase (Year 3 in 2026) offered through distance education and will be placed in Quintile 1-3 public primary schools.
5. School-based Mentor Incentives: Non-financial incentives for school-based mentors identified and agreed upfront with school-level partners.

Format of submission:

1. **Maximum of 10 pages (excluding annexures), using a minimum of 11pt font and single spacing.**
2. Brief overview of the HEI's involvement or interest in ESTIs - the ability to meet the quantum of students will be an advantage.
3. Brief overview of the IP's involvement or interest in ESTIs - a track record in working with ESTIs will be an advantage.



4. Indication of the collaboration agreement between the HEI and the IP and how this will be managed - an existing working arrangement between the HEI and IP will be an advantage.
5. Confirmation of the number of student teacher interns that the partnership can provide in both the experimental and control groups.
6. Alignment with government bursary schemes, specifically Funza Lushaka.
7. Approach to incentivising school-based mentors.
8. Names of specific staff members that will be involved (short CVs to be included as an annexure and do not count towards the 5-page limit)
9. Additional information as preferred

Timelines: 31 January 2026

● **Step 3: Review and screening**

TICZA will conduct a desktop process to evaluate all submitted proposals through a Selection Committee comprising SACE, DBE, DHET and Funders.

The Selection Committee will consider the following selection scoring criteria:

- 5%: Compliance requirements of the HEI
- 5%: Compliance requirements of the IP(s)
- 5%: Signed cooperation agreement between the HEI and IP(s)
- 5%: Risk management plan
- 10%: Fidelity to eligibility criteria (HEI type, IP presence, student cohort size, and student profile)
- 30%: Demonstrated capacity to meet the implementation requirements of the EWAS model, including track records in delivering ESTIs
- 30%: Motivation for inclusion in the prototyping process
- 10%: Qualifications and experience of key staff that will be involved (minimum of two from the HEI, and two per IP)

Timelines: 15 February 2026

● **Step 4: Final selection and onboarding**

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

Timelines: mid-March 2026



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 consortia should minimum requirements not be met and/or in the eventuality that full project funding is not confirmed.

Contact for submissions/inquiries: All communications regarding this RfP and the submission should be directed to: **Tshegofatso Mashaphu**, tshegofatsomoabelo@jet.org.za

