TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A DIRECTED WRC PROJECT

KEY STRATEGIC AREA	KSA 9: Advisory Services
THRUST	N/A
PROGRAMME	Advisory Services
TITLE	Developing the digital advisory space for Non-Revenue Water (NWR):Phase 2 of the Non-Revenue Water Management Portal

General context:

South Africa continues to face significant non-revenue water (NRW) challenges, despite various attempts to revitalize "No drop" and raise awareness about this issue. Many municipalities continue to grapple with issues relating to infrastructure maintenance, effective billing and revenue collection, accessing budgets to undertake effective maintenance, and the skills needed to hold this suite of dynamics in balance.

The WRC and other organizations continue to fulfil the role of developing a portfolio of tools, guidelines, solutions and technologies to support the most optimal management of NRW. Making these tools easily accessible to organisations and individuals supporting the management of NRW is key to supporting the reduction of NRW.

From 2023 to 2024, the WRC managed a project that enabled the development of an information portal and digital advisory space to assist with the management of NRW in South Africa. This entailed the development of a database of existing tools supporting NRW (e.g. guidelines, tools, applied research and baseline reports, technical briefs, training material, practical case studies), the conceptualisation of the best way to categorise and present these tools in terms of supporting the various stages of NRW management, and the design of an online information repository and visual elements on a WordPress platform with differentiated user categories, relational database searchability, as well as a user guide.

Phase 1 was funded by the Department of Science and Innovation as part of its support to the National Water RDI Roadmap, which prioritizes investment into supporting NRW challenges. The portal was launched at the 11th South African Water Loss Summit in August 2024.

The DWS, SALGA, DSI, SWPN and DBSA water partnership office have been key partners in shaping the portal in Phase 1.

Rationale:

Through the engagement with partners in phase 1 it is clear that this portal is a valuable digital approach for the WRC to support its strategic thematic priority on providing advisory service and tools to the water sector in areas of need.

The Phase 1 development of the portal surfaced a series of needs and opportunities that would strengthen the sustainability, effectiveness and uptake of the portal into the future. These needs were however outside of the scope of the phase 1 contract and we thus wish to transition to a phase 2 with an additional scope of work.

In depth understanding of the phase 1 project and portal functionality is a key requirement to excel in the

phase 2 part of the project.

Objective:

The objective of Phase 2 of the Non-Revenue Water Portal Project, is to expand the technical scope of the portal to accommodate technology solutions for the sector, whilst simultaneously facilitating the maintenance, dissemination and commercialization (of elements) of the existing portal.

Undertaking Phase 2 will involve responding to 5 areas of work.

1. Portal hosting, maintenance and support

   - The existing portal needs to be maintained (domain, cloud space, domain registration renewal, any software licenses linked to the site, etc.).

   - Minor updates or edits to the portal as required, backups, software updates, and ensuring ongoing functionality.

   - User management needs to be undertaken. This includes supporting users interacting with the site (e.g., queries, approval/removal, permission assignment, query referral); content management (e.g. content approval, classification of content with correct key words, loading advertisements in special positions).

   - Under the Toolkit search function, add a private property owners managing leaks document repository section.

2. Development of portal specific strategies, policies, criteria

   - Develop the policies, strategies, and criteria that will standardize the approach to directory users, content upload, advertising, marketings/communication of the portal.

   - This should include a policy and criteria for approval of content, for uploading of directory entries, a branding guideline and should also include policy and criteria for the technology solutions part of the portal to be developed in phase 2.

   - The portal terms of use, privacy and cookie policy should also be refined.

3. Commercialization conceptualization and operationalization

   - In phase 2 the portal must be transitioned to a stronger commercial value proposition, such that it can cover its own costs into the future.

   - This will require the development of a business case that costs what it will take to sustain the portal for the next 10 years, and what could be done to generate revenue to cover these costs. This will need to be carefully scoped and unpacked with partners and the 'market' (potential organisations who would pay to have a presence on the portal) to understand viability.

   - Technical considerations for upgrading the portal to accommodate a paid model (pay gates, policies, appropriate organization who can host a revenue generating website etc) would also need to be built into the costing.

   - The WRC currently has a plan in place to host the portal once the project comes to an end. However, if the commercial value proposition requires payments etc, part of the task of the project team will be to explore what the right long term organizational home will be for the portal (this is a continuation

of the engagement process that was started in Phase 1).

4. Technology Solutions Portal

    - The Phase 1 portal does not include the NRW technology solutions for the sector.

    - A database of existing technologies needs to be developed, uploaded and integrated into the search functionality of the portal. This would on expand on existing work such as the database of technologies built through the WRC funded Isle utilities project, the water conservation demand management compendium, DWS water technology portal, etc.

    - This area of work needs to be integrated with the commercialization thinking of the portal (the team will need to explore if some aspect of the technology information sharing should be provided at a fee, what should be uploaded during phase 2, etc.).

5. Portal dissemination and communications

    - A portal communication and dissemination strategy should be developed and operationalized (to be implemented with support for the WRC communications team).

    - This should include: identification of key platforms and events to present the portal at (3-5 per year), development of a social media content (messaging, design, boosting on WRC pages), email information dissemination.

    - Associated software communication capacities should be built into the portal to support this work, where required (e.g. emailer)

    - A generic set of well designed slides should be developed to communicate the opportunities of the portal

    - A communications/branding guide should be developed to guide uniformity in communication.

Appropriate web portal, graphic design and communications support should be built into the team for relevant components of the project.

The commercialisation, communications and technology work packages need to be guided by stakeholder engagement interviews/ focus groups.

The site will need to be migrated to WRC infrastructure towards the end of contract, as part of the overall cost of the proposal.

Outputs and Products:

Work packages 1-5 should be implemented over a 24 month period.

Time frame
24 months

Total funds available
R 1 200 000

Closing date
The closing date for submission of proposals is detailed in the call document.

Proposal Template
Please apply on the standard WRC template, via the BMS system, details in the call document.

Contact
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