
The Higher Education Leadership and Management Programme is delivered by Universities South Africa as part of the Department of Higher Education and Training's University Capacity Development Programme.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A 10-YEAR SUSTAINABILITY PLAN FOR THE HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of these Terms of Reference is to appoint a suitably qualified service provider to develop a 10-year sustainability plan for the Higher Education Leadership and Management Programme (HELM).

2. INTRODUCTION TO UNIVERSITIES SOUTH AFRICA

Universities South Africa (USAf) is the representative association of South Africa's 26 public universities. All SA universities collectively constitute USAf's membership. USAf aspires to a **sustainable and responsive university system**. USAf aims to strengthen the South African university system through advocacy, building capacity, and advancing collaboration with local and international partners and society.

3. BACKGROUND TO HELM

The Higher Education Leadership and Management (HELM) programme is a flagship initiative of Universities South Africa (USAf), designed to strengthen leadership, governance, and management capacity in the South African higher education system. In response to a rapidly evolving higher education landscape, HELM seeks to develop a Sustainability Strategic Plan to guide its operations, priorities, and impact over the next 10 years.

The imperative to enhance leadership and management capacities within the higher education sector remains a priority for the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), Universities South Africa (USAf), and the universities. In recent years, there has been an acknowledgement of the challenges faced by emerging managers, from mid to executive positions, both in administrative and academic roles, who are grappling with continuous change and the multifaceted complexities of management and leadership. In response, HELM has developed and implemented bespoke programmes and interventions, ranging from

Executive Leadership Programmes (ELP), Foundations of Leadership (FoL) training, to gender equity initiatives such as Women in Leadership (WiL) and Student Affairs and the Student Success (SASS) programme. The activities are implemented in accordance with the approved DHET proposal and follow a three-year cycle. Recently, HELM received DHET funding for its next funding cycle. Therefore, the planned strategic sessions aim to produce a 10-year sustainability Plan (2026–2036), including an implementation roadmap.

4. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The key objectives are to:

- 4.1 Critique the current projects and status of the HELM Programme, considering the prevailing realities, challenges, and dynamics of its operating environment, including human resources and its positioning relative to similar programmes both nationally and globally.
- 4.2 Facilitate stakeholder consultations to inform future strategic priorities.
- 4.3 Review and advise on HELM's strategic vision, mission, core values, and goals.
- 4.4 Identify strategic themes, key performance areas, objectives, and success indicators.
- 4.5 Produce a 10-year short-, medium- and long-term sustainability Plan (2026–2036), including an implementation roadmap.

The consultant/team will undertake the following:

- 4.6 **Document Review:** Analyse existing HELM reports, policies, evaluations, and national strategic documents (e.g., DHET Policy, USAf strategies) and provide a comprehensive appraisal and relevance of the HELM's projects and how best their relevance can be determined.
- 4.7 **Stakeholder Engagement:** Interview key stakeholders, including:
 - 4.7.1 USAf and HELM leadership
 - 4.7.2 Program leads for the various HELM programs.
 - 4.7.3 University executives past and/or present (VCs, DVCs, Deans)
 - 4.7.4 Programme alumni and beneficiaries.
 - 4.7.5 Government partners (DHET).
- 4.8 **Environmental Scan:** Conduct a SWOT and SOAR analysis of HELM's operating context.
- 4.9 **Strategic Framework Development:**
 - a. Define or refine HELM's mission, vision, and values.
 - b. Identify strategic focus areas and flagship initiatives.
 - c. Develop goals, objectives and outcomes.

4.10 **Implementation Plan:** Outline clear timelines, responsibilities, budgets (indicative), and risk mitigation measures.

4.11 **Validation:** Present the draft plan to USAf and stakeholders for feedback and validation.

4.12 **Finalisation:** Submit the final Strategic Plan incorporating feedback.

5. DELIVERABLES

The following deliverables will be required:

- 5.1 Inception Report and Work Plan
- 5.2 Stakeholder Consultation Report
- 5.3 Situational Analysis (SWOT, SOAR)
- 5.4 Draft Strategic Plan for review

6. REQUIRED EXPERTISE

The consultancy team or individual should have:

- 6.1 Proven experience in strategic planning, especially in the higher education or public sector, including facilitating or leading strategic planning sessions, workshops, or processes, and developing organisational strategies.
- 6.2 Deep knowledge of the higher education system in South Africa or equivalent knowledge sector organisations.
- 6.3 Strong facilitation, consultation, and stakeholder engagement skills.
- 6.4 Excellent research, writing, and analytical abilities.
- 6.5 Familiarity with government priorities (e.g., DHET, DSI, etc.) and global higher education trends.

7. OVERSIGHT OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

The assignment will be managed by the HELM Director.

8. INFORMATION

Additional information, as may be deemed appropriate, must be submitted.

9. ADDING VALUE

It is expected that potential service providers will critique the brief to add value where possible in the proposal to be submitted. Thus, the onus is on the service provider to add value to the brief by leveraging their specialised competencies for the assignment.

10. BUDGET

- 10.1. This assignment will be funded by HELM, and the Consultant will be remunerated in accordance with USAf procurement policies, taking into consideration the range and scope of the work, as well as their level of experience and expertise.

11. TIME AND DURATION

- 11.1 . The assignment will commence with the final signature of the contract by both parties and will end on **30 September 2026**. We anticipate a total of **20 days of work**, including the finalisation of the plan.
- 11.2 . The assignment will be regarded as completed when the Director of HELM is satisfied that all planned actions in response to the scope of work and deliverables have been addressed.

12. SPECIAL CONDITIONS

No service may be rendered without an official purchase order and a signed contract.

13. CONFIDENTIALITY AND OWNERSHIP OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

- 13.1. The Consultant is required to maintain confidentiality throughout the design and delivery process of this assignment.
- 13.2. The ownership of the intellectual property rights associated with this work will be vested within the USAf, for its exclusive use.
- 13.3. The Consultant shall request approval of USAf to use materials and information for research or scholarly purposes on information gleaned during this project. Such approval must be obtained in writing from the Contracting Authority.
- 13.4. HELM's material is protected by copyright and may not be copied, reproduced, distributed, or used in any form without the prior written permission of USAf.

14. REPORTING

The Consultant will direct any enquiries and report to the Director of HELM at USAf and provide regular feedback on the status of the assignment and any assistance required. A final report will be required at the end of the contract period, outlining the work carried out during the course of the contract, challenges encountered, and potential areas for improvement. The report will also confirm the secure storage of all material content in HELM's repositories.

15. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

- 15.1. The Request for Quotations from individual Consultants should detail how they meet the required qualifications and experience for this assignment as per Section 11 above.
- 15.2. A costed proposal with deliverables and timelines which correspond with the scope of work must be submitted. Proposals must include:

- 15.2.1. A cover page providing the Consultant's name and all contact information.
- 15.2.2. Brief CVs highlighting all relevant qualifications, experience and skills.
- 15.2.3. Copy of ID and highest qualification.
- 15.2.4. An assignment plan that details an overview of the approach and tasks to be undertaken as outlined in sections 3-7 above.
- 15.2.5. At least three references from clients or from previous employers where the Consultant has undertaken similar work. Universities South Africa reserves the right to verify the authenticity of these references.
- 15.2.6. A separate quotation (inclusive of VAT, if applicable) and payment schedule for the services to be provided, as per the scope of work indicated. Quotations must remain valid for a period of 90 days.
- 15.2.7. Please also check the section "Contracting Authority and Compliance" below for mandatory documents that should accompany the proposal and quotation.

15.3. The closing date for submission of the proposal is Tuesday, 10 March 2026, at exactly 16:00.

15.4. The proposals for the envisaged review of HELM should be submitted to Mr Tiisetso Mahlaela via the email address tiisetso@helm.ac.za.

15.5. Additional information, as may be deemed appropriate, must be submitted.

15.6. If you have not had a response to your application by 10 May 2026, consider your application unsuccessful.

16. CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF SERVICE PROVIDERS

16.1. The proposal will be evaluated in terms of the requirements of the request and any information which may be deemed necessary.

16.2. Functionality points will be evaluated as follows:

Components to be Evaluated	Evidence	Weighting
Knowledge and experience of the subject matter	Evaluation methodology, knowledge of higher education programming	40
Experience and skills	CVs of the Consultant (as per the key qualifications, skills and experience set in Section 11 above)	30
Deliverables	Deliverables as per the proposal. Ability to render the service as required.	20
References	Client base and written references	10

16.3. Bidders must score a minimum of 80 points to qualify for further evaluation on B-BBEE and price or to be considered as a preferred bidder.

17. COST OF SUBMISSION OF PROPOSAL

USAf is not responsible for any costs incurred by the Consultant in the process of developing the proposal.

18. PAYMENTS

- 18.1. Payment shall be made on rendering of professional satisfactory service and submission of the required invoice and timesheet.
- 18.2. Payment shall be made within 30 days into the Consultant's bank account after the receipt of an acceptable invoice and timesheet. (Banking details MUST be submitted for payment to be effected).
- 18.3. Based on the project deliverables, USAf reserves the right to effect payment according to phases completed satisfactorily.
- 18.4. The service provider shall be responsible for his/her own arrangements about income tax or any other tax obligations, such as may be applicable. The appointed service provider hereby indemnifies the Contracting Authority against any liability that the Contracting Authority may incur as a result of any obligation on the Contracting Authority to pay over any tax on behalf of the service provider as a result of the provisions contained in the agreement to be signed with the appointed service provider. For purposes of the Agreement to be signed with the appointed service provider, the term "tax" will include SITE, PAYE and any other form of tax, including interest and penalties. The Contracting Authority will, where applicable, deduct 25% of all fees paid to the service provider and remit them to the South African Revenue Service.

19. CONTRACTING AUTHORITY AND COMPLIANCE

- 19.1. The proposal must either conform to the minimum requirements as set out in this document, or it must be stated clearly how it deviates from these requirements and why. Proposals that strictly adhere to the specifications are preferred. Offers exceeding the minimum requirements of the specifications are acceptable. Minor deviations may be considered.
- 19.2. The Contracting Authority for the Consultant is USAf. Under this assignment, the Consultant will be accountable to the Director of HELM.
- 19.3. This document will form part of the signed contract between the successful Consultant and USAf once the proposal has been accepted by USAf.
- 19.4. Non-Compliance with Delivery Terms
 - 19.4.1. As soon as it becomes known to USAf that the service provider will not be able to render services within the expected period and/or against the quoted price and/or as specified, USAf must be given immediate written notice to this effect. In instances of non-compliance with certain sections of the contract by the service provider, USAf reserves the right to terminate the agreement.

19.5. Pricing

19.5.1. All prices must be in South African Rand value and must be inclusive of VAT. Fees will be payable in South African Rands on satisfactory completion of the assignment.

19.6. Client Base

19.6.1. Service providers must have specific experience in the delivery of the required service. They must submit at least recent references or a client base reflecting the entity where a similar service was rendered, the duration, the project value, the date, and whether the project was successful. USAf reserves the right to contact references during the evaluation and adjudication process to obtain confirmation.

19.7. Company Profile, Financial Information and BEE Shareholding

19.7.1. The company's profile, together with the BEE certification, is mandatory.

19.8. Registrations

19.8.1. Proof of company registration must be submitted in the form of copies of the relevant registration documents. e.g. CC/CK, Pty (Ltd). It is the service provider's responsibility to ensure that their Cipro annual returns are in order and that the registration remains valid throughout the contract tenure.

19.9. Tax Pin Certificate

19.9.1. An original and valid tax pin certificate issued by the South African Revenue Service certifying that the taxes of the service provider are in order must be submitted before the closing date and time. It is the service provider's responsibility to ensure that their SARS annual returns are in order and that the registration remains valid throughout the contract. Failure to do so will invalidate the proposal.

19.10. **Enquiries may be directed only in writing to:**

Mr Tiisetso Mahlaela

Administrator: HELM

E-mail: tiisetso@helm.ac.za