Request for Proposals for an Evaluation of Takalani Sesame (mass media and community engagement)
November 2019

Research has shown that playful learning experiences for young children helps foster their development and lay the foundations for them to become creative, engaged, lifelong learners.1 Adults’ capacity to guide play in meaningful ways can unlock the transformative power of education for young children. However, lack of knowledge on how the benefits of guided play can contribute to early childhood development (ECD), particularly in development settings, continues to lead to young children growing up without opportunities to develop through play.2 We hypothesize that a participatory and research-driven approach to play intervention development can effectively guide the creation of quick, easy, actionable tips and strategies to help caregivers capitalize on everyday play opportunities.

Sesame Workshop and the LEGO Foundation will collaborate to develop and implement a program around the importance of learning through play. The intervention will aim to build to unlock the power of play to support learning and whole child development outcomes for children.

Introduction
Sesame Workshop is the nonprofit media and educational organization behind Sesame Street, the pioneering television show that has been reaching and teaching children since 1969. Today, Sesame Workshop is an innovative force for change, with a mission to help kids everywhere grow smarter, stronger, and kinder. We’re present in more than 150 countries, serving vulnerable children through a wide range of media, formal education, and philanthropically-funded social impact programs, each grounded in rigorous research and tailored to the needs and cultures of the communities we serve. For more information, please visit sesameworkshop.org.

Background
Takalani Sesame, Sesame Workshop’s South African adaptation of Sesame Street, has educated and entertained children for over 15 years. Takalani Sesame promotes early childhood development and education and addresses critical issues facing families while supporting South Africa’s mother-tongue based education policy with television, radio, digital content, and community and classroom engagement in many of South Africa’s official languages.

Through a partnership with LEGO Foundation, Takalani Sesame will also engage young children, parents of young children, and social workers serving young children through in-school, afterschool, and community-based programs with messages and learning materials contextualized for the participating communities to support the importance of learning through play in children’s development. The combined intervention package, bringing together mass media and community engagement programming, will aim to unlock the power of play to

support learning and whole child development outcomes for children. A curriculum that specifies the project’s learning objectives and outcomes will be made available to evaluators.

The Evaluation
Research is at the core of Sesame Workshop’s model for creating engaging and effective content for young children and families.

This evaluation will have two phases:

Phase 1 will employ both quantitative and qualitative. Phase 1 will be used to pilot instruments to assess the impact of outreach and mass media programming targeting children, caregivers, and ECD practitioners in Eastern Cape and/or Gauteng provinces, as well to conduct focus group discussions with caregivers to conduct a performance evaluation of programming in Eastern Cape and Gauteng.

Phase 2 will assess the impact of outreach and mass media programming targeting children, caregivers, and ECD practitioners in Free State. We expect Phase 2 of this evaluation to use a mixed-methods approach, using an experimental design that compares participants’ (children, caregivers, and ECD practitioners) changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors before and after the project with those of non-participants, controlling for potential confounding factors.

Timing
Proposals should plan for Phase 1 evaluation in June 2020.

Proposals should plan for Phase 2 baseline evaluation in December 2020, midline in July 2021, and endline in December 2021. Piloting of measures should be planned for 2020.

Sampling
Phase 1 of the evaluation will be conducted in Eastern Cape and Gauteng provinces in alignment with the project’s intervention sites. Phase 2 of the evaluation will be conducted in Free State province in alignment with the project’s intervention sites. Piloting of measures will take place in Eastern Cape and/or Gauteng.

The sampling procedure must consider demographic variables such as socio-economic status, and child age and gender. The analyses will examine the project’s educational impact by SES, child age and gender, and other variables that may be important to the community context. A power analysis should accompany the description of sampling methodology. A comparable control group that is unexposed should also be sampled to allow a basis for comparison.

Outcomes and Measures
The measures used in the evaluation must reflect the project’s educational goals and be age- and culturally-appropriate. Researchers must pilot test the measures before fieldwork to ensure their validity and to make certain that other common measurement issues (such as a ceiling effect) are addressed. The evaluation will measure developmentally appropriate outcomes in children and adults as articulated in the project’s curriculum.
The main outcomes of interest for the evaluation are:

- Changes in caregivers’ and practitioners’ knowledge, behavior, and attitude on the value and benefits of play in their child’s development
- Changes in children’s, caregivers’, and practitioners’ time spent engaging with children in a variety of guided play activities with a variety of materials
- Changes’ quality of caregiver/practitioner-child interaction during play activities
- Changes in children’s ability to manage frustration and persist at tasks
- Changes in children’s creative and flexible thinking skills

The researcher will be responsible for identifying internationally validated measures and adapting them for this evaluation if necessary. New measures must be pilot tested and validated prior to fieldwork.

**Proposal Components**

Proposals shall include a provision for delivery of the following elements:

1. **Research Design:** Proposals shall outline the design of a potential study or set of studies including:
   - Sampling strategy, including sample size justification, and a description of how comparison/control groups will be determined and how the sampling will account for any attrition that may occur
   - Research measures
   - Data collection plan, including a description of monitoring and quality control measures for data collection; a description of how researchers are trained and ways in which researchers will ensure that they adhere to the ethical standards of research set forth by the Society for Research on Child Development (http://www.srcd.org/about-us/ethical-standards-research)
   - Data analysis plan that outlines how data will be analyzed to draw conclusions about the project’s impact
   - Timeline

2. **Budget:** A detailed budget for the project shall be submitted with the research proposal. The budget shall include separate sections outlining costs associated with each data collection wave.

3. **Key personnel:** CVs or biographic summaries of key personnel.

4. **Past evaluations and references:**
   - A 1-2-page description of similar or comparable studies in which the agency has engaged in the past, or similar work sample
   - Contact information for at least 2 previous clients for references

**Deliverables**

Researchers will deliver the following for the evaluation:

1. **Baseline report:** After completing the baseline data collection, researchers will submit a report of findings in English.

2. **Data analysis plan:** Before endline data collection begins, researchers will submit a detailed data analysis plan that describes how data will be analyzed to draw conclusions about the project’s impact.
3. **Endline report**: The researcher will submit a draft version of the report of the findings to Sesame Workshop for review prior to the completion of a final report (in English). The report must include an Executive Summary.

4. **1-2 page summary**: The researcher will submit a 1-2 page summary of findings with appropriate infographics created for a non-research audience.

5. **Data, original instruments, videos, IRB approval document, consent forms, data and other material**: Researchers will be required to submit an electronic version of data (in SPSS or SPSS-compatible format), as well as original instruments, and any videos made of children during the research sessions. Instruments will be in the local language (if applicable) and English. Quantitative data will be submitted in English and qualitative data should be submitted in the original language and an English translation. These items will become the property of Sesame Workshop. Note: The researchers selected will have access to instruments used in previous Sesame Workshop assessments, which can be used as a base for creating questionnaires and other data collection devices for the proposed study.

**Deadline**
Proposal should be submitted by 15 January 2020.

**Budget**
The research proposal should not exceed a budget of US$350,000.00 with a final report due on December 31, 2021.

**Evaluation Criteria**
Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:
- Experience in conducting and analyzing qualitative and quantitative research and knowledge of media research methodologies
- Experience conducting educational research with young children
- Experience conducting research in low-resource contexts
- Experience conducting research in diverse international contexts
- A demonstrated capacity to work in a range of settings and to deliver products in a timely fashion under tight and strict monitoring, management and deadlines
- The ability to produce high-quality reports
- The ability to conduct high-level analyses such as multivariate analyses and multi-level modeling
- Feasibility of study within budget and time parameters
- Appropriateness of research design
- Capacity to execute proposed study

**How to Submit Proposals**
Submit proposal via email to: kim.foulds@sesame.org. Please note the following in the email subject heading: **Proposal for Takalani Sesame Evaluation**. Upon submission of a proposal, bidders will be asked to submit a Contractor Information Form.
Disclaimers

1. Sesame Workshop will not compensate offerors for preparation of their response to this RFP. All expenses incurred in the preparation of the Proposal in response to this RFP is at your sole cost and responsibility.

2. This RFP does not guarantee a resulting contract and Sesame Workshop is under no obligation to offerors unless and until a written agreement is signed by Sesame Workshop and offeror.

3. Sesame Workshop may withdraw or amend this RFP at any time.

4. This RFP may result in one or more contracts for parts of activities.

5. Sesame Workshop may request additional rounds of responses based on more detailed instructions or requirements.

6. Information provided by Sesame Workshop about the RFP process, including this document, is confidential to Sesame Workshop. Proposals produced under this RFP belong to Sesame Workshop. Any distribution of such Proposals must first have written authorization from Sesame Workshop.

7. Offerors are not entitled to any compensation or payment for any submission to Sesame Workshop or Sesame Workshop’s use of such submission for any purpose. Offerors acknowledge that Sesame Workshop in good faith will have the sole discretion to determine whether any compensation is due to offerors for use of any submitted materials. Offerors recognize that any creative materials, concepts, ideas and techniques that are disclosed to Sesame Workshop may be similar or identical to, in whole or in part, to creative materials, concepts, ideas and techniques already developed, in development, or to be developed in the future by Sesame Workshop.

8. Offeror will retain a copy of its Proposal and hereby releases Sesame Workshop from any liability for loss of, or damage to the copy of the Proposal that is submitted to Sesame Workshop.

9. All intellectual property and related materials provided to offeror by Sesame Workshop shall remain the sole and exclusive property of Sesame Workshop and no license is granted to offeror other than as may be necessary for offeror to prepare and submit its Proposal hereunder. Offeror understands and agrees that Sesame Workshop is entitled to use any part of the Proposal which is not concrete or does not itself constitute protectable and/or copyrightable property without compensation to offeror.

10. No work may be sub-contracted out on this proposal, unless otherwise agreed to by Sesame Workshop.

11. Any contract to be entered into between Sesame Workshop and an offeror will be for work provided solely as work-made-for-hire, with ownership and all rights belonging to Sesame Workshop.

12. The cost estimate and proposed time-line and all other terms and conditions stated in your Proposal must remain valid for 180 days from the date of delivery of the Proposal to Sesame Workshop.