

Request for Proposal

Project on Profession-Based Language Assessment in Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy

Researcher - Feasibility Study

July 2011



Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators
Alliance canadienne des organismes de réglementation de la physiothérapie

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Project Background

Every year, approximately seventy internationally educated occupational therapists (OTs) and two-hundred physiotherapists (PTs) apply to their respective Ontario regulatory colleges for licensure/registration. Over the past three years, regulators and associations in these professions have undertaken diagnostic research aimed at describing the experiences of internationally educated practitioners as they move to licensure. Findings indicate that one major issue affecting the integration process relates to the profession-specific language ability of a number of those occupational therapists and physiotherapists not educated in Canada. At present, both professions require that internationally educated applicants demonstrate official language proficiency through a choice of standardized tests (TOEFL, TOIEC, MELAB, etc.). However, discussions with regulators and employers alike suggest that these forms of evaluation are not necessarily good predictors of effective language use in the working environment. Both professions require proficiency in specific workplace-related language functions, and both are replete with lingo, abbreviations and linguistic nuances which are not covered by general language assessments. As such, there is a need to develop a profession-specific test that could be used as part of entry-to-practice requirements to better prepare internationally educated practitioners for the workforce and to ensure appropriate service delivery to the public.

To this end, we are pleased to announce that the Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators (The Alliance) in partnership with the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario (COTO) and the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario (CPO) have received funding from the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI) to develop a profession-specific language tool applicable to both occupational therapy and physiotherapy. This project is truly unique as it is the first initiative to explore the potential of evaluating and assessing language use in two related disciplines. Should this pilot project prove successful, the model could potentially be used by other professions sharing common language needs and work environments.

This thirty-month initiative is comprised of three main components.

1. The first component is a profession-specific language analysis in which language experts will be retained to determine the communication requirements of the PT/OT work environment. To this end, The Alliance retained the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB) to conduct analysis of the language used on a daily basis in OT and PT workplaces. During this process job sites in a number of practices settings were observed, including: home care, hospitals, private practice, pediatric and long-term care centres. Their report, "Benchmarking Language Demands of Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists in Ontario" has been attached for your reference and is expected to serve as a foundation for the test development phase. These findings were shared with key stakeholders (regulators, academics, language experts, etc.) at a meeting in April, 2010. Feedback from this meeting was incorporated into CCLB's final report.

2. Feedback from this meeting is being used to inform the second component of the initiative – the development of a profession-specific language assessment tool. In August, 2010 a firm was retained to develop and pilot this test. This test is expected to be completely web-based and will assess all four language domains: reading, writing, listening, speaking. Once developed the language assessment tool will be field tested on a representative sample of internationally educated occupational therapists and physiotherapists as well as their Canadian educated counterparts to ensure its efficacy. The validated test is expected to be completed by the fall of 2011.
3. A feasibility study will be conducted to determine the most efficient, cost-effective, secure and accessible method to implement and deliver the newly developed test throughout Ontario and potentially Canada-wide. Once this phase of work is completed, a proposal seeking additional funding will be submitted for a full-scale pilot test in Ontario and/or throughout Canada based on the findings from the feasibility study.

As per this RFP, we are seeking an individual/firm to carry out elements of the third component of the project set out above.

Objectives and Key Activities

The primary role of the individual(s)/firm retained will be to:

- Review project research/activities to date including the CCLB language benchmarking report, report on the correlation between applicants language proficiency test scores and entry-to-practice exam performance and documentation related to the development of the profession-specific language assessment tool;
- Interview and collect relevant information from the firm retained to develop the profession-based language test;
- Conduct a detailed environmental scan of the delivery and administration of other language tests in Canada with special attention paid to: accessibility, technological requirements, frequency of offerings, security, risks, test sites, and associated costs;
- Based on an analysis of the environmental scan, prepare a list of best practices in the delivery of language assessment tests;
- Collect information from OT and PT regulatory authorities (11 physiotherapy, 10 occupational therapy) regarding their current policies on official language proficiency (including list of accepted tests/scores).
- Prepare a list of questions for OT and PT regulatory authorities aimed at discovering the challenges/opportunities associated with adopting the profession-specific language test (developed as part of this project), as one of a list of tests, and/or the only language assessment tool accepted for entry-to-practice purposes.
- Participate in a series of teleconferences facilitated by members of the Management Committee with staff from OT and PT regulatory authorities aimed at gathering

responses to the list of questions described above. The researcher will produce a written record of these proceedings and integrate them into the interim and final reports.

- Based on the collective research set out above, propose a model/plan for the implementation of the newly developed OT/PT profession-specific language assessment tool in Ontario and across Canada.

Process and Reporting

The project manager (PM) will oversee the administration of the activities described above in conjunction with the project’s Management Committee (MC). The Management Committee includes key personnel from The Alliance, COTO and CPO.

At the outset of the contract the successful individual/firm will provide the PM with a detailed project plan outlining key activities, milestones and associated timing.

Day-to-day project guidance and support will be provided by the PM. Major items will be presented to the Management Committee for approval/decision.

Deliverables

The deliverables for the test development component of the project include:

- An interim report detailing the findings from the environmental scan and information gathered from OT and PT regulators;
- A final report which includes the findings set out in the interim report and plan for the roll-out and implementation of the OT/PT profession-specific language assessment tool based on identified best practices.

Tentative Timing and Activities

Time	Activity	Responsibility
July 4, 2011	Distribute RFP	PM
July 21, 2011	Receive responses	PM
August 1, 2011	Select consultant	PM + MC
August, 2011	Finalize terms of reference	PM + Alliance + Researcher
August, 2011	Orientation meeting with The Alliance – Toronto, ON	PM + Alliance + Researcher
August - October, 2011	Conduct environmental scan and regulator teleconferences	Researcher
October 7, 2011	Draft interim report	Researcher
October 15, 2011	Review interim report and submit questions/revisions	PM + MC
November 4, 2011	Draft final report	Researcher

November 18, 2011	Review final report and submit questions/revisions	PM + MC
November 30, 2011	Finalize report	Researcher

Assumptions

- The Management Committee reserves the right to refuse all bids received.
- The bid submitted is to be exclusive of costs related to travel. The consultant/team will be reimbursed for associated project travel costs in line with Treasury Board and Alliance guidelines.
- The consultant/team will provide written status reports to the project manager as required.
- The consultant/team will participate in teleconferences/meetings with the Management Committee as required.
- No part of this project is to be subcontracted without prior permission of the Management Committee
- Any potential conflict of interest related to this project must be expressed in the proposal.
- Ownership of the final report and all related information will rest with the project partners.

Proposal Format

The proposal must include the following five (5) components:

1. An introductory section that describes the intended methodology and shows that the applicant clearly understands the scope and intent of the project and how to approach this type of research;
2. A work plan detailing timelines, communications, personnel and associated costs;
3. An account of any similar projects (i.e., related to feasibility studies, health care regulators and/or the provision/delivery of language tests) the applicant/firm has completed in the past;
4. A brief curriculum vitae/biography of all the researchers involved; and
5. 2-3 references of clients from similar projects. The Alliance may contact references at its discretion.

Preparation of Proposals

- Proposals are to be sent by email to the project manager, Keith Johnson at keithjohnson.pm@gmail.com.
- **Proposals are to be received no later than July 21, 2011 at 4:00 p.m. EST.**
- Questions regarding the RFP are to be sent in writing to keithjohnson.pm@gmail.com. No questions will be answered within 24 hours of the submission deadline.

Criteria for Review of Proposals

The PM and MC will use the following criteria to review proposals:

- Understanding of requirements – the proposal demonstrates that the respondent has a clear understanding of the scope and nature of the work required
- Suitability of the proposed methods/approach
- Plan meets the stated objectives
- Appropriateness of the timeline for completion
- Qualifications and related experience – of both the organization and the personnel assigned to the project
- References from customers for whom the organization has completed similar work
- Reasonableness of costs for proposed methods/approach
- Agreement on confidentiality of work and final report
- Agreement on publication of final report
- Statement regarding conflict of interest, and description of any potential conflict of interest (financial or other)

Appendix I – Proposal Scoring

Criterion			
Delivery by email before deadline	Yes= continue	No=stop	
Work plan and timelines described	Yes= 2	Partial = 1	No=0
Previous experience included	Yes= 2	Partial = 1	No=0
Qualifications of personnel described	Yes= 2	Partial = 1	No=0
References included	Yes= 2	Partial = 1	No=0
OVERALL SCORE (Max = 10)			

Criterion	Rating out of 10
Understanding of requirements	
Suitability of methods/approach	
Plan meets stated objectives	
Appropriateness of timelines	
Qualifications	
Related experience	
Reference check	
OVERALL SCORE (Max = 70)	

Criterion	Rating out of 20
Pricing/Value	
OVERALL SCORE (Max = 20)	

TOTAL SCORE	Rating out of 100
OVERALL SCORE (Max = 100)	